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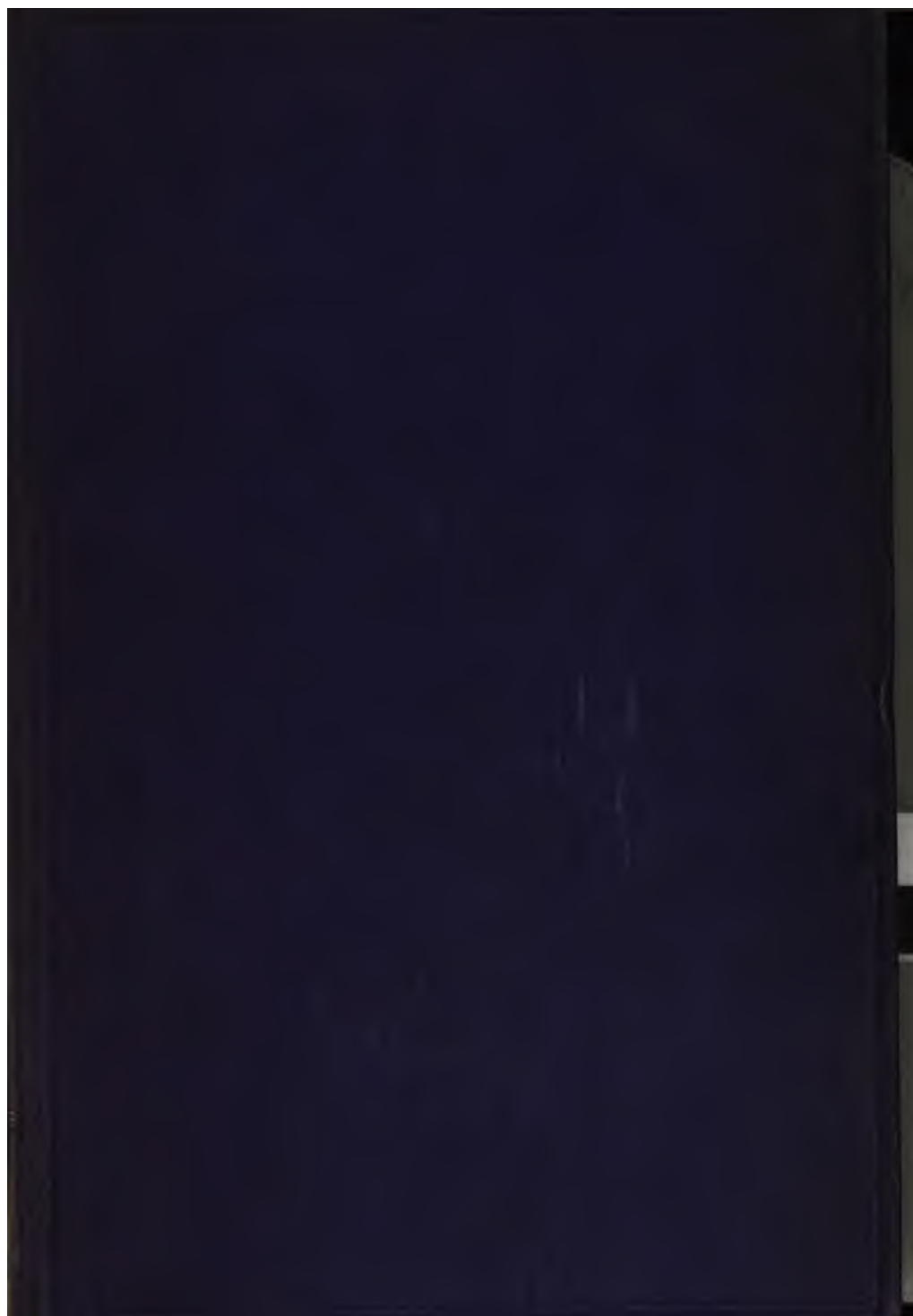
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DENZIL PLACE.



# DENZIL PLACE

A STORY IN VERSE.

BY

VIOLET FANE.

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## PART I.

—:o:—

“ Alas, that love should be a blight and snare,  
To those who seek all sympathies in one !”

SHELLEY.



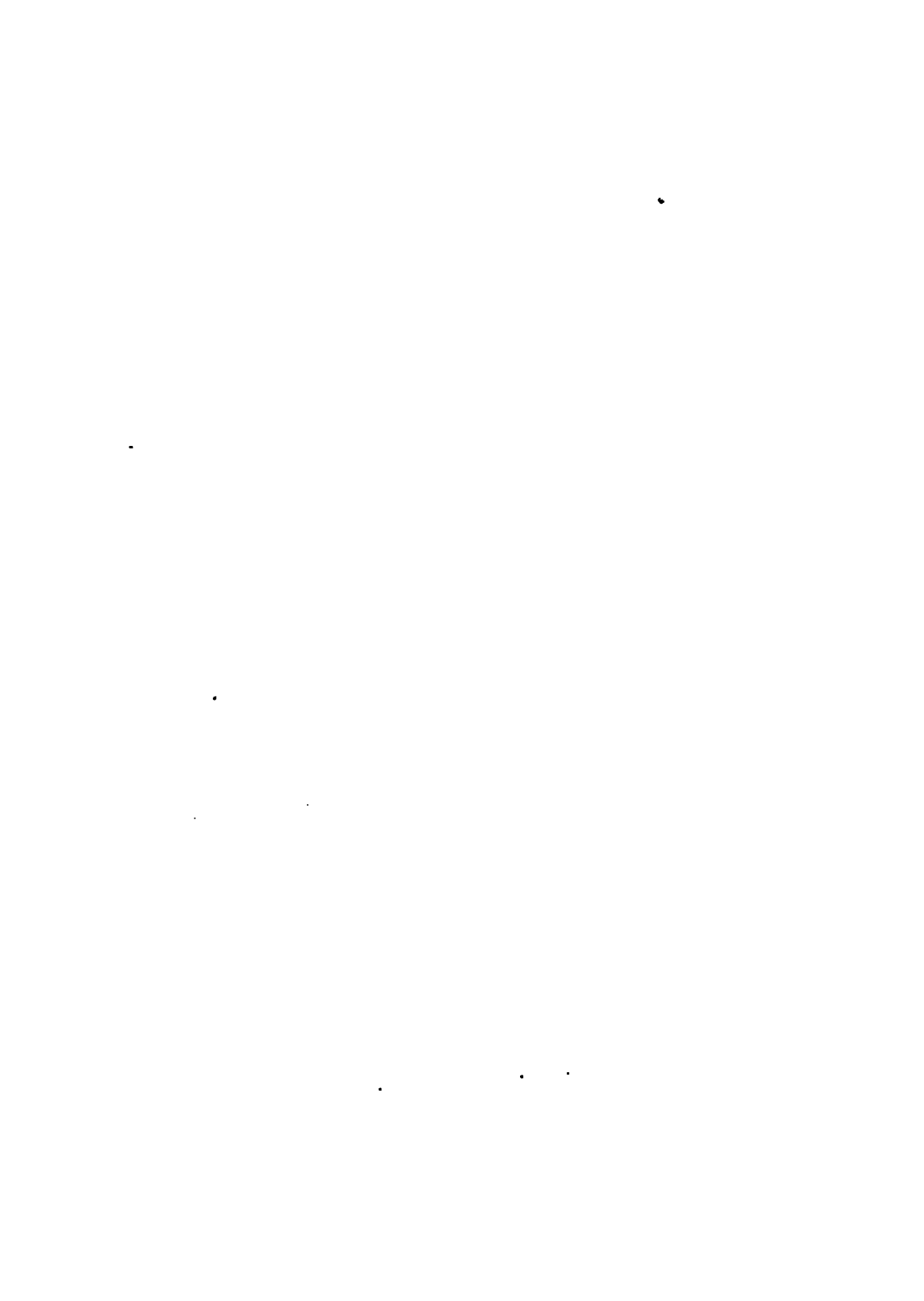
'This is not living, tho' I move and breathe,  
Ah, is there nothing better in the world?  
I love to see the lily's cup unfurl'd  
To greet the sun,—I love the lake beneath  
And all the beauty of these barren days,  
But is there nothing better? As I gaze  
I seem to dream a mad unmeaning dream  
About some fairy thing I have not known,  
Sigh on, wild winds! your everlasting moan  
Haunts me in summer whilst the thrushes sing  
And ev'ry day in ev'ry year, the ring  
Of something sad seems floating on the air,  
I hear it sighing round me ev'rywhere,  
And yet I hope and wait, whilst still I seem  
As tho' my soul were drifting down a stream  
To meet some unknown, unexpected thing.



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DENZIL PLACE.

Crawl'd from the rising to the setting sun ;—  
Such small ambitions, such a narrow creed  
All held, and yet, withal, self-satisfied,  
Each saw the mote within his brother's eye  
As thro' a microscope, and hailing it  
With joy, proclaim'd it to the little world  
Of waiting Pharisees, whose open mouths  
Could mutter other things besides their pray'rs.  
Amongst these mouldy human vegetables  
Constance rais'd up her head and seem'd a rose,  
And when compared with their's, she deem'd her home  
A garden, for not only did they live  
Their dull, respectable and tedious lives  
Apart from thoughts of Beauty, Art, or Love,  
But many liv'd them too in enmity  
One with another ; many too, were poor,  
And liv'd in dwellings desolate and damp,  
Empty of all save the provincial pride  
Of Squire and Squiress ; others too, were ill,  
For sometimes to the village where they liv'd  
Came fevers ;—from the chast'ning hand of God,  
(So said Sir John, altho' a meddling man  
Who came from London, made him build anew  
Some cottages he thought were good enough.

For such as had been born and bred in them ;  
And tho' this meddling man had also said  
The fever had not been if good Sir John  
Had mov'd more with the times).—But what of this ?  
Some infidels will always see a cause —  
A cause of bricks and mortar, in the curse  
Sent down by God upon our sinful race !  
(So said the parson, and advised a pray'r,  
But thought the drainage should be left alone,  
As heretofore ;) and so they pray'd and pray'd,  
And drank the water of polluted wells,  
Whilst on the fever raged, and had its course ;  
Then, strange to say, abated ; many homes  
Made desolate, and in the village church  
Were many mourning forms, and Constance, sad  
And humbled, felt ashamed of being well,  
Yet thank'd her God the fever spared her home.

So, looking not to those whose lives were bright—  
Fairer than her's, she look'd around and saw  
How sad life was for many ; thus she made  
Her's seem the best ;—so free, she thought, from toil,  
Exempt from pain and squalor, affluent,  
And deck'd around with many pleasant things—

The woods, the lake, ~~the~~ cheerful summer-room,  
The careless moments,—nothing going wrong,—  
This calmly negative and passive life  
Seem'd good to her, and so the days went by.

To Constance had been born a seeming son  
Without the torture of the "pains of hell"  
(As saith the pray'r book), unto him she clung  
This childless second mother, young and fair;  
Roland his name; he was the child of one  
Who might, maybe, have seem'd a rival now  
To Constance, had she lov'd kind old Sir John  
With that unjust, impassion'd jealousy  
Which reaches from the Present to the Past,—  
His dead first wife had died before the boy  
Had learnt her face, and Constance was to him  
Playmate, and friend, and mother all in one.

To her he was the only link that bound  
Her life to what was gay, and fresh, and free  
From dull restraint; a dear excuse for youth  
And secret romping; he was champion, friend,  
And little lover, jealous, wayward, fond,  
And brooking no control save from her hand.—

“ Oh, had he been my son,” she often thought,  
“ I could not love him more than now I do.”  
(Thus oft these self-anointed mothers speak,  
With such a **tender tremor** in their voice,  
They almost think their foolish words are true !)

Often in summer days these two would go  
And gather cowslips in the dewy fields  
Before the hay was mown. The cuckoo-flow'r  
Here rais'd her fragile head, and here and there  
With joyous cry, the happy child would hail  
The rarer blossom of the orchis, prim  
And purple, with its spotted snake-like leaves.  
As the cool meadow sloped towards the lake,  
The grass grew rank and tall and bulrushy,  
And giant buttercups and pigmy frogs,  
And all the wondrous sprawling water-flies,  
Made little Roland clap his hands in glee—  
Here was a boat, wherein the youthful friends  
Would row at eventide, and watch the sun  
Sink down behind the western woodland ridge ;  
Then all the water grew a pink surprise  
To Roland—pink at first, then pale and wan  
And yellow as the primroses, then white,

A shining, dazzling, oval mirror, set  
In the dim, dark'ning purple of the night.

Sir John, meanwhile, was busy at the town,—  
The nearest town, dispensing justice there,  
Or corresponding in his library  
With some one of the friends who lagged behind  
The wheels of Progress. “This and this was good,  
“But that was dangerous, and might do harm—  
“It *might* do good, but good would come in time,  
“No need to hurry it ;—the poor man's life  
“Was happier and calmer when his mind  
“Look'd not beyond the clods from whence he sprung ;  
“Why, let him plough, and thresh, and sow and reap,  
“And let the better people of the world  
“Trouble their wiser heads about his weal.”

This was the usual strain in which he wrote  
To those in London who were then in power ;  
“A useful county man,” they said of him,  
“Not brilliant,—taking people by the ear,  
“But staunch, and true, and *English* to the bone !”

Of him they spoke the truth, for he was true  
And honest in that most dishonest cause—

The war against the liberty of man,—  
The war against the liberty of thought,—  
The war against the poor the rich have made,—  
The temporising for the little while  
During the which God holds responsible  
The living man, then after “Come what may !  
“ So long as all the evils that ensue  
“ Come not in this, my time, it matters not,  
“ Starvation comes but once,—let well alone !”  
This was his argument, could he have look'd  
Into the selfish secrets of his soul ;  
But being kind and just in smaller things,  
His very self suspected not himself  
Of holding other than a party creed  
Respectable and fair ; if to himself  
And those like him most fair, what matter then ?  
“ Each for himself ! He was an Englishman !”

To church together on the Sabbath morn  
Constance and Roland used to wend their way,  
All thro' the deeply-rutted Sussex lanes,  
And o'er the fields, whilst on his sturdy cob,  
Sir John would jog along the highway road.  
In Constance had been born a passionate love

Of Nature, all that was not made by man  
Seem'd sacred, beautiful, and good to see.  
Thus, tho' a Christian, in her gentle breast  
Some unsuspected germ of Pantheism  
Lay dormant ; much the easiest gate to Heav'n  
Seem'd to be thro' the lovely works of God—  
The flow'rs—the trees ; she often felt in church  
How good it would have been to worship there  
Amongst the oaks, as once the Druids did,  
With nothing roofing off the blue of Heav'n,  
And nothing interfering to distract  
The heart from God ! Here, in the mouldy church,  
So many sights arrested her young mind,  
Seeming to drag it back again to earth,  
And oftentimes she rais'd her timid eyes  
To see the neighbours enter, one by one.  
“ And who is that ? ” or “ Why is she in black ? ”  
“ Oh, yes, I know, the son who was at school ! ”  
“ She is in mourning for *his* grandmother ;  
“ And that's the Captain, who is going to wed  
“ With Helen.” Often worldly thoughts like these  
Constance would try to check, but still they came ;  
Then there were sadder thoughts,—above the pew  
The mildew'd hatchments of her husband's race

Hung in a gloomy row upon the wall,  
The one that hung over the entrance hall  
The year that little Roland's mother died,  
Eight years ago, when she was only twelve,  
(Roland was eight years old,) she saw it then  
And ask'd her maid the reason it was there,  
That painted piebald sign-board, and half thought  
That Farleigh Court had turn'd into an inn.  
"Some day," poor Constance thought, "I too must die  
" And lie forgotten, nothing will be left  
" To make these simple peasants think of me  
" Save some such dismal diamond on the wall  
" Of this old church! *My* side will be in black  
" With three poor greyhounds madly rushing on,  
" Ah, rushing whither? But Death comes to all  
" And Life is very often very sad!"

Sometimes they skirted Geoffrey Denzil's park  
(Their absent nearest neighbour, then abroad,  
Unknown as yet to Constance, tho' Sir John  
Had been his guardian when he was a boy,  
Their fathers being kinsmen). From the wall  
That fenced it round, the ivy-tresses hung,  
And served to help young Roland when he climb'd

Follow'd by Constance, into Denzil park,  
There would they wander, for the tangled shade  
Unthinn'd for many years, possess'd a charm  
For her young heart she scarce could understand,  
The gnarl'd limbs of those neglected trees  
Seem'd weirdly twisting into human shapes,  
And nowhere did the ferns and mosses grow  
In such luxuriance ; the rooks, too, built  
Whole cities, she could scarcely call them nests,  
And Roland once had said, on seeing them,  
He thought the weight of them must make the heads  
Of the poor heavy-laden fir-trees ache—  
They often waded ankle-deep in leaves  
Scatter'd by many winters ;—here the air  
Seem'd heavy with the Past, from man to leaf,  
But by and bye the tangled thicket ceased,  
And evergreens, and winding gravel walks  
(Untended now) led to the sloping lawn—  
Quaint shapes of nymph and satyr guarded it,  
And further on, a gate of filagree  
Sided by Denzil dragons, open'd full  
On the deserted terrace. Here and there  
Forming the centre of a garden bed,  
A yew-tree (pointed once, and duly trimm'd


As are the toy-trees of a Noah's Ark,)     )  
Uprear'd its head, all ragged and unshorn,  
And seem'd to show the garden's plan had been  
Italian. With doors and windows barr'd,  
Sometimes the trespassers would peep and mark  
The silent, low, Elizabethan house  
Behind the bowling-green ; thro' screening boughs  
They often watch'd its only sign of life—  
The kitchen chimney's faint blue smoke, that curl'd  
Over the cedars when the wind was east.

One day (it was a Friday) they were thus  
Roaming about, and playing hide and seek,  
Spring-time was near, and all the noisy rooks  
Were busy with their nests,—the day was fine,  
And on the leafless trees the little buds  
Were green with tender promises of spring.  
The old house seemed to wear a brighter look,  
The shutters were unbarr'd, an agèd man,  
A gardener, was passing to and fro  
Rolling the gravel walks ;—some carpets hung  
Upon the garden-gate ;—the breath of life  
Seem'd once more waking with the budding spring ;  
A groom rode by them on a chestnut horse,

They look'd, and saw that ev'ry chimney smoked,  
And Constance said, "He must be coming home."

They linger'd on till almost eventide,  
Constance, unconsciously, whilst Roland play'd,  
Lost in her aimless, nameless, day-dreaming,  
And building many castles in the air.  
Her years, so few, so pure, so soon arrang'd  
Into this unemotional, dull, shape,  
Not to be chang'd, had never known as yet  
Those violent alternate lights and shades  
Which many lives have weather'd, yet at times  
She seem'd to feel the spray of coming storms,  
Or bask beneath the rays of unknown suns,  
Whilst something softly whisper'd to her heart  
That life as yet had not begun for her—  
She seemed to *wait*, and often with a smile  
She woke to chide her foolish maiden-dreams  
And wonder'd how she ever could forget  
That she had been the wife of good Sir John  
For three whole years, and liv'd at Farleigh Court.

This day it was the trotting of a horse  
And all the cawing cloud of frighten'd rooks



That call'd the gentle dreamer back to life,—  
Roland had wander'd from her, and in sport  
She waited for him, hiding in the shade  
Of tangled laurels, near the avenue.  
So thickly grown was all the underwood,  
That Constance, dress'd in sombre color'd serge,  
Was lost and hidden ; as she waited there  
A rider on a chestnut horse pass'd by  
(The same she noticed ridden by a groom  
Two hours ago). From out her hiding-place  
She watch'd him pass her ;—tho' unseen till then  
His was a face she seem'd to know before,  
And she felt glad the master had return'd  
To light the fires, and let the sunshine in,  
To plant the terraces with glowing flow'rs,  
To sweep away the wither'd winter leaves,  
And bring the breath of life to Denzil Place.

There are some scenes in this our little life  
Which the uncertain light of memory  
Seems to illumine with more vivid glow  
Than all the rest, as in old banquet halls  
Dim with oak-panelling, ere candles beam,  
Some falling log will raise a transient flame

To light *one* pictured face upon the wall  
When all the space around is indistinct,—  
Thus Constance, looking back upon her youth,  
At what she was, and what she was not yet,  
In after years, saw Geoffrey Denzil ride  
As she had seen him first, thro' long arcades  
Of evergreens ; his head a little bow'd,  
As tho' to shun the overhanging leaves,  
And sitting somewhat forward on his horse,  
His eager profile as he pass'd her by—  
A little hawk-like—looking far to front,  
His boyish head, with all its cluster'd curls  
And trace of southern suns upon his cheek,—  
*Then*, she had heard the trotting of the horse  
Upon the shingly English avenue  
Long after that young rider had pass'd by ;  
And *after*, when so many more had pass'd  
(The horsemen who had left her on Life's road),  
She often seem'd to hear that trotting steed.

Between this picture and one other one  
The intervening space was half obscured,  
But next, she saw a garden in the sun,  
A cypress, all festoon'd with *Banksia* rose,

Emblem (she used to think) of Death and Love ;  
And then she saw herself, once more, as then  
Clinging to Love and Life.

                  These memories,  
As tho' two pictures, destin'd to be hung  
Always together, in the after days  
Seem'd painted on the panels of her heart,—  
They haunted her until that solemn hour  
Which comes to all, when, rudely torn aside,  
Or gently, as with tender hand, withdrawn,  
The curtain falls, which shrouded heretofore  
The picture we may look at only once.



It came as I lay dreaming  
As it doth ever,  
Had I guess'd it's subtle seeming  
Would I ever? never, never!  
But it came as I lay dreaming.  
So, as I lay dreaming,  
On the river  
Of my life went softly streaming,  
On it's breast no little quiver  
Warn'd me as I lay there dreaming.  
Now I am no longer dreaming,  
Waking, quaking—  
Dazed, I watch the rushing, streaming,  
Of the stormy waters breaking  
On the dream that I was dreaming.  
As a straw floats on the gleaming,  
Dashing river,  
So my heart seems tossing, teeming  
With each impotent endeavour  
Drown'd amidst the torrents streaming.  
Ah, it came as I lay dreaming!  
And for ever  
Must I listen to the screaming  
Of the storm-birds, and the river  
Dashing madly onwards, seeming  
Bent on bearing on it's steaming  
Headlong course, each poor endeavour,  
Had I guess'd it, would I ever . . . ?  
Never! Never!  
But it came as I lay dreaming!



“ . . . . . A youth to whom was given  
 So much of earth, so much of heaven,  
 And such impetuous blood.”

WORDSWORTH.

## II.

**I**F Geoffrey Denzil never had return'd  
 To Denzil Place, if from the distant shores  
 Where he had wander'd now for many years  
 His English heart had never long'd for home,  
 Then, maybe, this, the simple history  
 Of some few years in some few English lives  
 Had ne'er been written, or had worse repaid  
 Even than now, the pains to trace or read.

When homeward bound, no thoughts of coming change,  
 Of brighter days, or sadder, vex'd his mind  
 Indifferent to Fate. With careless eyes  
 He saw the white cliffs of his native land,

His country ! Yet so stern and cold and grey  
This misty sole surviving mother seem'd  
After the smiling violet-scented lands  
Where he had linger'd, that he wonder'd why  
He had so yearn'd to see those shores again.  
He mused of home, and here a flash of pain  
And sad remembrance clouded o'er his brow,  
As he bethought him that no happy face  
Would beam to welcome him. Anon his thoughts  
Return'd in sadness to those bygone years  
When, with the mother who had been to him  
So much in youth, he had so lov'd the spot  
He now approach'd thus carelessly. As yet  
He had no thought of long abiding there,  
But he was wearied of perpetual change  
And exile, and he long'd to look again  
On the once lov'd and still familiar scenes  
Of his past boyhood ; thus upon the day  
Which look'd so bright to Constance in the woods,  
But which was dim and misty near the coast,  
Geoffrey returned to lonely Denzil Place.

He had determin'd that, as never more  
'There was a chance of his remaining there

'Twere best to let the house, for then at least  
There would be light and life within its walls,  
And the slow, certain fingers of decay  
Might be awhile arrested, so for this  
He came to England.


But the days went by  
And still he linger'd on, and Denzil Place  
Remain'd unlet, nor did he lease the land  
As he had purpos'd ere he left the south.  
The days went by, the months, and then a year,  
And but that now and then he went to town,  
The lonely owner of those mortgaged lands  
Stay'd on at Denzil. Once the Denzil race  
Had been amongst the wealthiest of squires ;  
But thro' misfortune or thro' ignorance,  
Or else thro' siding with the losing side  
Whenever there was anything to lose,  
Or else by being intellectually  
Too far ahead the age in which they liv'd,  
Or else by clinging to some yesterday  
In Politics, Religion, or Reform,  
And crawling thus too stubbornly behind,—  
Be it enough to say they had been poor

Of later years ; elections, lawsuits, debts,  
Or earlier still, attainders, forfeits, dice,  
Had left the present Denzil with a third  
Of what had been his ancestors' estate ;  
And thus he had not wealth enough to tend  
With the magnificence it merited  
His rambling red-brick mansion ;—and again,  
As his extensive sylvan slopes and shades  
Yielded him nothing save the Beautiful,  
They but encumber'd him, and were it not  
For the old memories that haunted them,  
He long ago had sold them, to become  
Once more a rich and independent man.

It was but seemly on returning home  
That he should pay a visit to Sir John,  
His former guardian, and his neighbour now ;  
They talk'd together over future plans,  
And much was said about the good to come  
Of letting Denzil ; but Sir John opined  
The good would never quite outweigh the ill—  
Geoffrey should do as other people did—  
Marry an heiress—live at Denzil Place—  
Keep open house—be prudent in some ways,

That without doubt, but dwell at his own home—  
Rear children there, and when at last he died,  
Be borne by his own grateful labourers  
To his own vault, in his own church, and there  
Be buried.

Here a softly open'd door,  
A gentle rustling of a summer-dress,  
And Constance look'd once more upon the man  
She peep'd at fawn-like thro' the laurel leaves  
At Denzil ; Geoffrey thought he ne'er had seen  
In all his wanderings, a face so fair,  
So soul-inspired—scarce seeming of the earth,  
Because as yet enfolded, as the bud  
Of some uncertain flow'r, which, cactus-like,  
Might bear a flaunting bloom, passionate-hued,  
Dyed with the dye of kisses and of blood,  
Or else, with those frail blossoms of the spring,  
Destin'd, it might be, but to bloom a day  
And die the next,—thus she appear'd to him—  
So out of place amongst so much that seem'd  
So dreary, dull, prosaic, worm-eaten—  
Surprised out of his usual sadden'd calm,  
He learnt this was the wife Sir John had wed ;  
Three years ago he read it in the *Times*,



For, tearing once, to light the cigarette  
Of an Italian princess, at Sienna,  
A scrap of paper, as it met the flame  
He, watching absently, read on the slip  
The name of what was once his parish church,  
Then read Sir John's, and guessing he was wed  
Tried to read on, but the devouring flame  
Had burnt up what had once been "Constance Leigh."  
He little cared, and turning with a smile  
He forthwith lit the fragrant cigarette  
Of the Italian princess. Now, a pang  
Shot thro' him as he thought how he had burnt  
The name of one so good and beautiful  
As he believ'd that Constance was ; at once  
He knew she was the woman that she seem'd,  
He guess'd the honesty of those sweet eyes,  
The wild, fair face, so wise and yet so young,—  
So wise, because not knowing Wisdom's use  
Or Folly's ; ignorant alike of harm  
(Call'd by so harsh a name), yet wrapp'd in dreams  
Of an improbable future. Unconfess'd,  
E'en to himself, a hunger in her eyes  
Said to his wak'ning heart a thousand things.  
Sir John explain'd the subject they discuss'd—

“Denzil,” he said, “is right well known to her,  
“She and my son have rambled thro’ your woods  
“Many a time ; he talks of letting it—  
“What think you, Constance ?”

“I am a poor man,”

Geoffrey explain’d with mock humility,  
“And beggars may not always have their choice.”  
“Ah, Mr. Denzil, you seem rich to us,”  
Said Constance, “when we wander in your park  
“And see so much to envy and admire !  
“Were Denzil mine, I could not let it go  
“Into the hands of strangers ; but of course  
“You will know best. The poor are all so glad  
“You have come home ; we often speak of you—  
“The poor and I together.”

Such a charm

Lurk’d in the murmur’d music of her voice  
That Denzil did not pause to meditate  
Upon the wisdom of her simple words,  
But from that hour the weighty subject dropp’d  
And Geoffrey Denzil stay’d at Denzil Place.

Then there began for Constance a new life—  
The dang’rous life of close companionship

With one who is not bound by tie of blood  
To be a comrade ; hitherto her days  
Fled in contented converse with a child,  
Or else in list'ning, kindly tolerant  
To childish sayings from a dull old man,—  
Those days seem'd good, she miss'd no promised joy,  
But now how empty had they seem'd to her  
Without this first-found sharer of her thoughts !  
Their very arguments. (they differ'd much  
Upon religion), roused her from her dream,  
And made of her a champion of the cross,  
The zealous advocate of Highest Heav'n,  
Her whole soul rose in arms to subjugate,  
As with an angel's slashing two-edg'd sword,  
The paganism of her new-found friend.

He held, indeed, unorthodox beliefs  
And unbeliefs, (nay, mostly unbeliefs,  
For these to him were easiest to hold,)  
He felt so much was wrong here on the earth—  
One giant fraud—a mutual "take in"—  
An all-pervading system of deceit—  
"Deluding one another"—this he saw,  
And being by nature honest, loyal, true,

He loath'd and hated all the canting lies  
That smirk'd and prosper'd wheresoe'er he turn'd ;  
Yet how to set things right he did not know,  
How to resuscitate to greener growth  
The wither'd branches of a rotting tree—  
To lop them off, he thought, were surely best,  
So he had laid the axe unsparingly  
To many an offshoot of the Tree of Faith,  
But lacked the knowledge how to vitalize  
The wholesome after-growth of tree and fruit  
That he would raise instead. Without a creed,  
His childhood's innocent beliefs pull'd down,  
Stubborn, and seeming careless, (for in Care  
He told himself he never should believe,  
Nothing was worth a care !) Pensive at times,  
Yet often kindling with a keener wit  
Than we dull islanders are wont to show,  
Inheriting a wild, impulsive heart,  
Yet deeming he had drill'd himself to feel  
No warmer than an iceberg ; with a face  
Which said more of the secrets of his soul  
Than he had wish'd maybe, could he have seen  
The tell-tale flash of light that sometimes beam'd  
From out his eager eyes ;—this was the man

Who came to Constance in her loveless youth,  
And, well-a-day ! 'twas just about the time  
When she was wearied with Sir John's complaints  
Against the railways and Democracy,  
And when the extracts from the Tory press  
Ceased to amuse her ! When this stranger came  
His cold indifference to all these things  
Became a bond of union, and in time  
They smiled at them together. Then Sir John  
'Treated young Geoffrey Denzil like a boy,  
Bore with his strange beliefs and unbeliefs,  
And patronized and gave him good advice ;  
And Constance, being married to Sir John,  
Seem'd bound to be a sort of mentor too,  
And took with him a sweet maternal way,  
Tho' he was ten years older than herself,  
And deem'd himself e'en older still, in heart.

But, like so many men who roam the world  
In quest of happiness—in quest of love,  
His heart was almost virgin as a maid's,  
Untouch'd as yet by any searching fires,  
And knowing it untouch'd, he hence assumed  
That Love existed only in the minds

Of madmen and of poets ;—he had ne'er,  
E'en in the wild meridian of his youth,  
Mistaken Pleasure for her kinsman Love,—  
He wish'd it had been possible to join  
Their hands together, but as never yet  
His lips had tasted their united joys,  
He felt assured they ever walk'd apart,  
And Love had always turn'd another way  
When he met Pleasure. To a mind like his,  
A fact observ'd some half a dozen times  
Became a deep conviction, and henceforth  
No contradiction seem'd admissible  
Unto a nature sway'd by common sense,—  
So Love did not exist, (at least for *him*,)  
And Pleasure seem'd a ghastly haggard shape  
When sad Experience had untied her mask,  
But still, if Love were not an empty name  
How sweet to love ! . . . .

The golden summer days  
Seem'd to be fleeter than they were of old,  
It seem'd to Constance never until now  
Had she e'er laugh'd, or sung, or felt amus'd,  
E'en Nature look'd more fair and beautiful  
As she and Denzil and the happy child

Pass'd over sun-lit lawn or grassy glade.  
But Constance, with her strict ideas of life,  
Had ne'er been satisfied to let the days  
Pass only in enjoyment ; duties, work,  
She had, and so had Mr. Denzil too,  
Upon whose fair estate so many poor  
And needy peasants look'd to him as God  
Who deals all mercies. He was kind and good,  
And he would always listen to her words,  
And take her gently hazarded advice—  
Here was a humble means of doing good,  
And she was pledged to many a Denzil clown  
To do her best.

“ You may not be too poor,”  
She said one day, “ to do such little things  
“ As they require. Your bailiff rais'd the rent  
“ Of that thatch'd cottage near the Farleigh lodge,  
“ The very day old Sands was paralyzed—  
“ His son enlisted on the self-same day  
“ To be a soldier—he had been his help  
“ Like a right hand ; and then his daughter died  
“ In child-bed (Do they *ever* come alone  
“ Misfortunes ?). So, you see this poor old man

“ Who scarce can lift one arm, must, half the day  
“ Carry his daughter’s child—his roof is gone,  
“ Or more than half, and lets in all the rain—  
“ (He was a first-rate thatcher once, himself,  
“ But now his arm . . . ). You said you meant to hunt  
“ This Winter—you are rich enough for that,  
“ Would it not make you happier to think  
“ You had one horse the less, and feel the while  
“ Your tenants had more comfortable homes ? ”

Denzil smiled at the keen philanthropy  
Of this devoted Lady Bountiful ;  
But in about a week she saw old Sands  
Rent-free and roof’d, and very nearly well.  
Sir John and Geoffrey often would dispute  
On foreign politics, and oft for hours  
She listen’d to discussions on the Pope—  
His government—“ too lib’ral,” said Sir John,  
“ And afterwards see what became of it !  
“ A lesson it will be to other States,  
“ And Kings, and Principalities, and Pow’rs !  
“ They were a people vain, hot-headed, weak—  
“ And Pius rashly gave their heads the rein.

" Perhaps he saw the folly of his ways  
" When from his windows in the Vatican  
" Surrounded by the signs of anarchy,  
" He heard the ravings of the demagogues,  
" And all the '*Viva Verdis*' of the mob  
" Under their bloody flags of liberty !"  
" But think," said Denzil, " how the masses groan !—  
" And how those men who live themselves at ease  
" Mourn for the sufferings of their fellow-men !  
" And then to know that even were they well  
" Govern'd and cared for, educated, fed,  
" It would be only by some accident,  
" To lend a tyrant popularity—  
" To serve a purpose—whilst the only cure  
" For all their ills—the spirit of Reform  
" Is further off than Rome is now from here !  
" I often think of it for days—at times  
" It really is enough to turn one grey,  
" To think that human beings, with sight, smell,  
" Taste, hearing, sense, and long experience,  
" Are ignorant and helpless as the brutes  
" That graze in yonder meadows !"

Then Sir John

" See, Constance, now, how soon we all were doom'd.

“ Once Geoffrey Denzil ruled us over here !  
“ The poignard and stiletto ! sword and fire !  
“ And he may tremble, too, for Denzil Place ;  
“ Those long black-bearded gentlemen, his friends,  
“ May use him as Mazzini fain would use  
“ ‘ *Il Rè galantuomo*,’ when he’s serv’d  
“ His purpose like a puppet. As for him  
“ (Victor Emmanuel), I dread indeed  
“ For him and for the mischievous Cavour  
“ The guillotine,—the fate of Louis Seize.  
“ Ah, those who love the cap of Liberty  
“ Have never seen it worn ! My father once—”  
(And here an anecdote.) “ But,” Denzil said :  
“ When men arise, long smarting under ills,  
“ They do not always act with self-control  
“ And dignity ; they only feel their wrongs,  
“ And have not leisure for those tender tears  
“ The fortunate at home can shed at ease  
“ Over the ills of others ! When a man  
“ Like Ciceravacchio, in ’Forty-eight . . . . .”  
“ And who,” ask’d Constance, in a timid voice,  
“ Was Ciceravacchio, of whom you speak ?”  
“ A patriot,” said Denzil, eagerly—  
“ And one who had the courage to declare

"The sentiments he felt—a humble man,  
"Rising through zeal and courage—firm, self-made,  
"Mazzini-ite, a friend of Liberty,  
"And not ashamed to own himself her friend."  
But after Geoffrey left, Sir John explain'd :  
"Ciceravacchio was Mazzini's tool—  
"He once sold forage in the streets of Rome—  
"A weak, vain, cruel, disaffected man,  
"Leagued with assassins."

Constance sadly thought,  
"Alas, tho' so well-meaning and so brave,  
"*How wrong he seems in almost everything !*"  
And tried henceforth to influence for good,  
In politics as well as piety,  
Her erring friend—she ventured thus at last,—  
"My husband says that those who think like you  
"Would 'slice all England into sandwiches'—  
"A little piece for each, of field and copse—  
"Destroying all our beautiful old parks—  
"And that if one grew richer than the rest,  
"(As some will always grow thro' industry  
"And honest perseverance), then the men  
"Dwelling upon the neighb'ring strips of land  
"Would rise and take his goods and burn his house.

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“ He says, if your opinions gain the day,  
“ He will be of the very first to go  
“ To stake or scaffold for his principles—  
“ And that in twenty minutes from the time  
“ When round about us here the banners wave  
“ Of your ideal republic, you will meet  
“ A brutal mob, elated with success,  
“ Bearing my head, maybe, upon a pike !  
“ (How horrible !) He says the Pope is good  
“ And Ferdinand the Second excellent—  
“ A ‘model sovereign’—most merciful,  
“ Sparing the very subjects who would rise  
“ And sacrifice him for their selfish ends—  
“ Why, when his faithful soldiers fired on them,  
“ He call’d to them with pity ‘do not fire !  
“ ‘Make prisoners;’ he said ‘but do not shoot,  
“ ‘Spare my deluded subjects !’ And he says  
“ That those three gentlemen who came to church  
“ Were one and all red-hot Republicans !  
“ (Ah, *do* be careful !)—members of a club  
“ Which governs by stilettos and by knives.  
“ He says they did not go to church to pray,  
“ But that they only went to make their notes,  
“ And see if our religion would be good

“ Should they succeed in driving out their own,  
“ But then he also says (and so *I* think,)  
“ That no religion will exist for long  
“ When wicked men like these are once in pow’r.”  
“ I do not think so either,” Denzil said,  
“ If by that sacred name you designate  
“ A superstitious creed of terrorism,—  
“ But we must hope religion will improve  
“ Along with knowledge and intelligence.  
“ Those three black-bearded men were friends of mine ;  
“ Italians, it is true, and years ago  
“ I was some time the guest of one of them.  
“ Talking, last Saturday, around the fire,  
“ Of England’s customs, government, reforms,—  
“ We pass’d to England’s women ; I was vain,  
“ And boasted of my lovely country-women,  
“ And long’d to show how beautiful *some* were;—  
“ And so I fear Sir John was partly right,  
“ And that they did not go to church to pray,—  
“ I fear they only went to look at you—  
“ If to do this will earn for them the names  
“ Of Red-Republicans or Carbonari,  
“ I fear they all were reddest of the red.”  
“ But,” Constance said, (ignoring with a blush

This first decided compliment,) "Sir John  
"Has also told me neither of the three  
"Dare show their faces on Italian soil."  
"Sir John is right," said Denzil, with a sigh,  
"Thanks to the godless narrow-mindedness  
"Of the oppressors of courageous hearts.  
"Sir John's ideas," he added, with a sneer,  
"Are all so broad—so cosmopolitan—  
"Tell him he ought to be elected Pope,  
"And govern Rome." He did not know the cause,  
But somehow he felt angry with Sir John—  
Exasperated with his common-sense  
And stolid absence of enthusiasm ;  
And so he ventured on this little sneer  
At the opinions of his kind old friend.  
Constance oft marvell'd much that one who held  
In such high reverence all greatest good,  
Honor, and truth, and wisdom, yet should drift,  
Anchorless, Christless, on life's stormy sea.  
It griev'd her much, and oft she pray'd to find  
Some spell to lure him to her gentler creed.  
She could have floor'd his sophistries with texts ;  
With any one but him she could have said :  
"Look in 'Corinthians' (two,) and chapter ten,

"Verse five, and drop this groundless argument!"  
Or, "turn to 'Kings' (one,) chapter nine, verse six,  
"And prithee ever after hold thy peace!"  
But starting from some heathen starting-point  
Unknown to her, it was as tho' he said:  
"No 'Kings' and no 'Corinthians' for me!"  
The very honesty with which he own'd  
His infidelity, disarm'd and shock'd  
His faithful friend—so well he *unbeliev'd*,  
She thought he surely would believe as well,  
As ardently, as earnestly, if once  
She could but draw him to the saving fold.

"Or, all is false," he said, "or all is true,  
"If true, then let us live and die for it;  
"If false, then let us cast away this creed,  
"However good, it cannot be the best,  
"If based upon a long accepted lie.  
"But, if our faith is *not* the work of priests—  
"If the great God, indeed, could stoop so low—  
"If such a paltry plan to save us all,  
"Or such a cruel trap to get us damned,  
"Could please the high great God, then can he be  
"The God to whom I clasp'd my infant hands?—

“ The God my tender mother lov'd ?—the God  
“ For whom the saints and martyrs dared to die ?  
“ Oh, give me back my youth's fidelity,  
“ But give me also back my childhood's God !  
“ Kind and forgiving Father ! from the clouds,  
“ How did'st Thou seem to heave the pitying sigh  
“ At my cut finger ! When my bullfinch died,  
“ I thought of how He counted all my hairs  
“ And all about the sparrows ! Now, alas !  
“ The caring for the individual—  
“ The sparing one mean unit 'special pain  
“ Seems so averse to the great principle  
“ Of abstract commonweal, methinks, that Heav'n  
“ Could scarcely work a pamper'd emmet good  
“ In this great ant-hill, without working ill  
“ To many more ; just, but Republican,  
“ His wrath must crush out Pestilence and Sin,  
“ What matter if the swing of His strong arm  
“ Strike down some good and whole amongst the rest ?”

Then Constance answer'd, “ Oh, it cannot be !  
“ I feel assured the Bible is the truth !  
“ It is the only comfort of the poor.  
“ Think how the very poor and ignorant

“ Have liv’d for many years upon its words !  
“ Then, what you say of Christianity,  
“ I pray that you may see things as they are—  
“ *I* understand it all—*I* grasp it all ;  
“ But even were its teachings too obscure,  
“ You know that we are told *we cannot know*.  
“ ‘ All things with God are possible,’ and then,  
“ Think what a beautiful and tender creed !—  
“ Think of the little babe in manger laid—  
“ The three wise men, all looking for the star—  
“ (I work’d them once in color’d Berlin wool ;  
“ They all wore turbans—dress’d in Eastern dress—  
“ And in the distance was the hostelrie.)  
“ Ah, can you doubt? (Her eyes were filled with tears,)  
“ And then the Virgin, with her lovely face—  
“ Oh, think upon the glory round that head !  
“ How many painters lov’d to dwell on it !—  
“ Much greater men than you—wiser than you—  
“ Yet *they* believed it all. Think, too, of those—  
“ The martyrs—all the early Christian saints  
“ Thrown to wild beasts ; then, Cranmer, it is true  
“ He died in what I call the civil war  
“ Of Christianity—but still he died—  
“ Died at the stake, and let his *wrong* right hand

“Burn first, and said it had offended him.  
 “Think of his faith!—ah, how it must have hurt.”  
 She added, shuddering, and held her hand  
 Against the light, and stroked it tenderly,  
 Seeing before her only in her zeal  
 Archbishop Cranmer’s burnt apostate hand.

Thus with her gentle female arguments  
She strove to quench the heathen in his heart.  
He listen'd for the sake of her sweet voice,  
Which murmur'd on and on so childishly,  
(So thought he) yet his heart went out to meet  
The signs of her soft foolish innocence.  
He felt the while as might some cruel hawk,  
Beneath the shadow of whose outspread wings  
A little bird is chirping her sweet song.  
For surely did he deem her child-like mind  
Would bend and yield to his, and those soft notes  
Become the echo of his stubborn thought ;—  
For she was his prey, for what he would,  
Still in her power, still in her keeping her,  
And he, who thought he was the conqueror, the desires  
Of his own heart, the passions of his senseless heart  
More wise.

Thus months pass'd by, and whilst the old man dosed  
In the long ev'nings, by the winter fire,  
To listen to the sound theology  
Of one, the other's sad materialism,  
No guardian angel would have shed a tear,  
And e'en a crouching Mephistopheles  
Had scarcely dared to rub his hands in glee.

Yet in those fire-lit ev'nings, all unknown  
To each as yet, the germ of bitter fruit  
Was sown. By both more sadly ev'ry night  
The soft "good night" was utter'd, when the foes  
After their wordy tournament, clasp'd hands.  
It seemed that Friendship, banish'd for awhile,  
Rush'd with too sudden haste to her old place,  
For as these votaries of hostile creeds  
Parted reluctantly, (unguess'd by *one*,)  
The Christian lov'd the Heathen, and the sinner  
Felt all his heart's blood warm towards the saint.

" Give it me back ! " she cried and turned away,  
 And press'd her hands against her throbbing brow,  
 " All that your robber-hand has day by day  
 " Torn from her breast who braved you until now—  
 Give it me back !

" Give it me back—my heart that seem'd so free,  
 " My unsuspecting trust in all mankind—  
 " My fearlessness of changes that might be  
 " And all my vanish'd peacefulness of mind—  
 Give it me back !

" Give it me back—the undreaded parting-hour—  
 " My careless hearing of your coming steed—  
 " Give me the ready jest in hall and bow'r,  
 " The easy welcome that I did not heed—  
 Give it me back !

" Give it me back—the tranquil dreamless night,  
 " The uneventful passing hours of day—  
 " The morning sun that rose without delight,  
 " Yet did not fade in bitterness away—  
 Give it me back !

" Give it me back !—alas, my words are vain !  
 " Nay,—keep it all, I yield you all the rest—  
 " I am your slave—ah, master, let me gain  
 " Some echo of this love within my breast—  
 Give it me back ! "

17

“ There are secret workings in human affairs which overrule all human contrivance, and counter-plot the wisest of our counsels, in so strange and unexpected a manner, as to cast a damp upon our best schemes and warmest endeavours.”

STERNE. (*Sermon XXXIX., page 170.*)

“ My loving arms have clasped him from the black hungry jaws of Death.

: : : : : : : : : : :

“ I saw the Grim Foe open wide his red-leaved book, but he wrote not therein the name of my brave love.”

(*Adah Isaacs Menken.*)

### III.

TO those who own the kindling blood of youth,  
I would say, “ Watch and ward !—beware,  
beware !—

Look from the topmost tow’r, like ‘ Sister Ann,’  
But unlike her, ’tis not for coming friend  
That I would have you search with shaded eyes

Along the far horizon ; 'tis the foe,—  
The moral whirlwind I would have you fear !”

Yet how provide against events which steal  
Silent and snake-like on our quiet lives ?  
(As thieves at midnight-hour used once to creep,  
For now they rob by day.)—

I would face Fire  
And Sword, and Love, more terrible than both,  
Had I but time to buckle on my mail ;  
But often it has been as tho' the Fates  
Were press'd for time, and anxious to begin  
Their work of devastation ; or if time  
Is e'er vouchsafed to ponder, then, alas !  
Our armour is mislaid, or want of wear  
Hath made it rusty and averse to clasp.

Oh, for the peaceful lives we all might lead  
If some good angel would but make a sign  
At each approaching danger to the soul !  
But well-a-day ! temptations seem to creep  
All shod with silence, and it is as if  
In times of feudal warfare, long ago,

An enemy approach'd, conceal'd by night  
Towards the fort, whilst at the postern gate  
The warder has not time to sound a blast  
Ere foemen revel in the citadel—  
Thus shamed, surprised, the poor beleaguered soul  
Dies or surrenders, mortified and maim'd !

'Twas thus with Constance, unexpected ills  
Seem'd crowding now upon her harmless life  
So calm before. Three quiet happy years  
Had pass'd away since Geoffrey Denzil first  
Return'd to England ;—they were chosen friends  
Constance and he, whilst as another son  
He seem'd to good Sir John, and to his boy  
An elder brother.

One wild, wintry, night  
They sat at Farleigh round the blazing hearth,—  
Roland had gone to rest, and good Sir John  
Was sleeping in his chair. His sister Jane  
(A spinster, who had but that night arrived)  
Was knitting silently. From time to time  
Her eagle eyes, above her spectacles,  
Would glance to where two beautiful young heads  
Seem'd somewhat close together, bending o'er

Some plans of cottages and alms-houses.  
This sister of Sir John's was younger far  
Than was her brother—unlike him in face  
As in her nature. She had once been fair,  
Flatter'd and spoilt, and could not brook the thought  
Of growing old. Selfish and cold and proud  
(May be resulting from some shock receiv'd  
To what she may have "pleased to call" her heart),  
She now seemed turn'd to uncongenial ice,  
And Constance, who liked almost ev'ryone,  
Felt chill'd and frighten'd by her influence.  
She also seemed to know, as children do,  
(And dogs,) that she, this withering old maid,  
Had never wasted o'ermuch love on her;  
Nay, she had seen her letters to Sir John  
Dissuading him from wedding one so young,  
And each one filled with gloomy prophecies—  
This had been kind, (for Constance now and then  
Had lately had misgivings of her own,)  
But then she knew no kindly motive lurk'd  
Beneath this good advice for him or her.

Sir John had known his sister wish'd to pass  
Her days beneath his roof—to keep his house

And rule over his servants and his son,  
And blurted out, in his blunt, honest, way,  
The same to Constance, to excuse the thought  
That there was aught of malice against *her*—  
But Constance had been happier to know  
It was some sentiment of enmity  
Which she might conquer, than to know the words  
Came from base motives of self-interest—  
And so she did not love Miss Jane L'Estrange,  
Who did not love her either.

On this night

There suddenly arose a cry of "fire!"  
And shrieks and sobs, and sounds of hurrying feet—  
Geoffrey at once rush'd to the op'ning door,  
And thrusting all the frighten'd crowd aside,  
Sprang up the stair, whilst Constance from below  
Exclaim'd "Alas! 'tis in the western wing  
"Where little Roland sleeps! oh, save his life!"  
"And Mr. Denzil!" Miss L'Estrange call'd out,  
Ere Geoffrey's active figure disappear'd—  
"I pray you, in the room that faces south—  
"The blue front room—*my room*—save all you can—  
"My Bible and my rings—my dressing-case—  
"My keys, my purse"—but here her voice was drown'd

By cries of frighten'd women, weights that fell,  
And sounds of coming footsteps from below,  
Hast'ning to succour those who still might be  
Alive, where there was such a chance of death.  
Then Miss L'Estrange begg'd Constance to be calm,  
"An active boy would not be burnt in bed—  
"He is upon the roof, and helping now  
"To quench the fire—or if, perchance, the smoke  
"Has hinder'd him from waking, 'tis a death  
"More painless, probably than I shall die—  
"We, providentially, are safe enough,  
"Ere they can reach the place where now we stand  
"The flames will yield ; and then the garden door  
"Is close at hand. ('Tis well that all my things  
"Are not arrived ;—that blunder I deplored  
"Was for the best.) Pray conquer your alarm !"

Sir John awoke and cried "God bless my soul !"  
And cough'd and sneezed, and then rang all the bells—  
The screaming maid-servants press'd down the stairs,  
Hurling before them all their worldly goods  
As yet unburnt, and which they hoped to save—  
For they had all been gossiping below,  
Whilst undisturbed the fire was burning on,

Till, going up to bed, with many a joke  
Made by the way, and full of "cakes and ale,"  
They met the smoke, and heard the crackling beams  
And all their laughter turned to piercing cries.

Constance stood clinging to the crowded stair;  
They jostled past her, rough and toil-stain'd men,  
Who came from out the village, having seen  
The flames that shot up over Farleigh Court,—  
Two sweeps, as black as demons, whom she met,  
She seized by each of their hard sooty hands,  
And pray'd they would save little Roland's life  
"And Mr. Denzil's."—For a horrid dread  
Gnaw'd at her heart, new-born and terrible—  
It was the thought that Geoffrey, brave and strong,  
Would rush to meet his doom, urged on, may be,  
By those last parting words she hurled at him,  
Without a seeming care about his life.  
In utter helplessness she waited long,  
Feeling each moment like a creeping age  
And list'ning for the voices that she lov'd—  
At last each pulse seem'd silent, and the fear  
That she might swoon, or show a woman's heart  
When she would fain be braver than a man,

Urged her to stagger to an open door  
Which led down narrow terraced steps of stone  
Into the garden.

There, she saw the flames  
Lighting the startled landscape far and near ;  
The angry tempest blew them to the East,  
Where, streaming like the tongues of hungry fiends,  
They seem'd to hurry on to meet the moon,  
Which, calm and still, beyond the glare of red,  
Watch'd with her placid eye the raging fire.

Anon, a cloud of smoke, and flames that seem'd  
Half quench'd, fill'd Constance with a ray of hope,  
Then with a fiercer glare, high up in heav'n  
Again they darted, to be driv'n once more  
Towards the kingdom of the quiet moon.

"The roof has fall'n !" anon she heard them cry,  
And dreading to behold the fiery foe,  
Fed with fresh food, spring forth in horrid glee,  
She hasten'd in, as pallid as the forms  
Of marble on the narrow terraced stair.

Sir John, with happy smile and beaming eye,  
Met her, and grasp'd her hands and kissed her cheek,  
Crying, "He's safe! he's safe!" But Constance, stunn'd  
And looking like a disembodied ghost,  
Ask'd, feebly, "Who? Where is he? Which of them?"  
To whom Sir John replied, "The boy! the boy!"  
And Roland, with his happy childish face  
A little pale, ran to the open arms  
Which Constance stretch'd towards him absently.  
A horrid fear which clutch'd her by the throat  
Threaten'd to suffocate her, till at last  
She hurried forward, and as one inspired,  
Said, in a firm authoritative voice :  
"All are not saved, for Mr. Denzil still  
"May be amongst the fiercest of the flames—  
"We will reward the one who rescues him."  
"Aye, that we will—he saved my Roland's life!"  
Sir John exclaimed, on which the soldier Sands  
(The son of that old man whom Constance once  
Had so befriended, and who for awhile  
Had sought his native village) hearing her,  
Leap'd up the stair, and hasten'd to the spot  
Where the now half-extinguish'd fire had rag'd.  
Constance was following, when kind Sir John

Restrain'd her, saying, "No, you must not go,  
" The falling floors and ceilings are not safe  
" Altho' the fire is conquer'd ; then, alas,  
" He may be burnt or crush'd, or even worse,—  
" You must not go."

So, looking as for Life,  
So, praying, could her lips have form'd a pray'r,  
So hoping, could her heart have dared to hope,  
And longing, with a longing terrible  
Intense and breathless ; thus she waited on.

The moments pass'd, then nearly half an hour,  
When at the summit of the winding stair  
She saw two men, one was the soldier Sands—  
The other was—not Denzil ;—in their arms  
They carried something covered with a cloak,  
Cumbersome, oblong, difficult to guide  
Adown the stair.

Then Constance guess'd the worst,  
And all the ills she had not feared before  
Rushed to her heart—the guilty, hopeless truth !—  
Then there arose before her anguish'd mind  
The vision of a future, desolate,—

The dim vast desert of an empty world  
Mapp'd out in ghastly colours ; and Sir John,  
Thinking to spare her tender heart the shock  
It needs must feel at any horrid sight  
Of Death or mutilation, took her hand  
And led her gently to the morning-room.

. . . . .  
But Geoffrey Denzil, though he scarcely breathed,  
Was yet alive—beneath some fallen beams  
And crumbled brick-work, blacken'd by the smoke  
And drenched with water, they at first had deem'd  
He had been crushed, for scarcely could they tell  
What aspect he would wear when they had freed  
His almost buried form. One broken arm  
Hung limp and useless ; he was stunned, they saw  
By a thick beam which struck him on the brow,  
But still he lived ;—they tended him with care,  
Washed from his cheek the trace of smoke and blood,  
And saw that it was pale, but still the face  
Of one who liv'd. The doctor set his arm,  
And watch'd him long, and said some hopeful words.  
Thus Constance saw him, when, with new-found strength,  
Hearing he liv'd, with Roland by her side,

She asked for tidings, longing once again  
To see his face ere it might be too late.

The doctor left his chair beside the bed  
And gave it her, then whispered to the boy  
'Twere better he should go away, for fear  
So many present might work Denzil harm,  
Should he awake to reason suddenly—  
“ I hope it may be well,” he gravely said,  
“ But for a day or two we cannot tell.”  
Then, saying that if Constance would remain,  
There were some few directions he would give  
About his patient's treatment, for awhile  
He left the room, and Constance sat alone  
Beside the pale and still unconscious form  
Of him she lov'd.

Then all her aching heart  
Seem'd fill'd with some new desperate resolve  
Once—once, before he died, to tell him all—  
'Twas all so strange, so terrible, so new—  
There lay the man she only knew she lov'd  
Some few short hours ago—how soon to die !  
How short and sad the stay Love made with her !  
How dear he was to her ! How dear those eyes

That could not see, or even feel, the tears  
Which fell from her's uncheck'd !—the effort made  
To see him whilst he liv'd, had not survived  
The ghastly dread his death-like look inspired—  
“ Oh, God, have mercy ! Hear the pray'r, I pray,—  
“ Give me his life ! ” She did not pause to think  
If this, her love, was sinful, or against  
The laws that God or man has made for man—  
She could not think—her wild solicitude  
For *him*—for what she felt was life to her  
Made her forget and trample in the dust  
All save this one absorbing madd'ning pain.

She thought she would not care, so he should live,  
E'en if she did not ever see again  
The face that seem'd so beautiful to her—  
Only to know that *somewhere*, far away,  
He liv'd and breathed, and that there was a hope,  
However vague, that she might once again  
Dream (only *dream* !) to look at him on earth !

Kneeling beside the bed she tried to pray,  
But her impatient spirit fear'd lest Heav'n  
Was too far off to listen to her pray'r,

So, in the madness of her agony,  
She call'd to Geoffrey Denzil, praying him  
Upon her bended knees that he would live.

“ Oh, if you die,” she said, “ you break my heart,  
“ Good-bye to life ! oh, let me die with you !  
“ Think of the three whole years we have been friends,  
“ Think of the places we have seen together—  
“ When you are gone my poor dreams crumble down,  
“ Oh, stay with me ! oh, live to be again  
“ My chosen friend ! ah, do not go away !—  
“ I love you more than life—come back to me !”  
She threw her hopeless arms about his neck,  
For o'er his face a death-like pallor spread,—  
Some change seem'd working in him—all her soul  
Look'd out upon him from her haggard eyes.

He did not move, she thought he scarcely breathed—  
The pulses of her body seem'd to die—  
“ Oh, speak to me ! Ah, do not leave me thus !  
“ Oh, Geoffrey, Geoffrey ! you will break my heart !”  
She sobb'd, and fainting, fell upon the floor.

I know not how it was some bell was rung,  
And by and bye a servant sought the room

Denzil was sitting looking at the wall,  
And Constance lay unconscious at his side,  
"She fainted," in the faintest voice he said—  
"This shock has been too great"—he waved his hand,  
"I'm better now," he said. "Leave me alone—  
'Take care of her, she needs must want repose."

They took her to her chamber, where she lay  
As one exhausted ; ev'ry now and then  
She sadly ask'd them, "Is he still alive ?"  
Or else she wept and said, "He was my all  
"On earth, my one companion ! Save his life !"

Sir John was touch'd, and watch'd her tenderly,  
And told his sister with how true a love  
She lov'd his boy, for never did he doubt  
That all her trouble came from fears for him—  
But Miss L'Estrange compress'd her virgin lips,  
Put on a face of Sphinx-like mystery,  
And shook her head with a contemptuous look  
At good Sir John, who was not one of those  
Born to decipher riddles. Thus for days  
Prostrate and weak, and wandering at times,  
She kept her chamber ; sometimes for whole hours

She stared at the gay pattern on the wall,  
Forming the tendrils and the leaves and flow'rs  
Into unmeaning words and animals,  
And human faces, all unknown to her.  
The doctor merely echoed Geoffrey's words :  
" The fright has been too much, she needs repose ;  
" She has received a shock, and nervous fear  
" Prostrates her mind and body ; let her rest."

And Denzil ? Had he felt those tender arms,  
And was he silent ? Had that gentle voice  
Summon'd his truant spirit back to earth,  
And was the change that pass'd across his face  
(That change which Constance feared had boded death)  
Only a slow revival to that life  
He may have felt her warm breath bid him live ?—  
I cannot say—I hope he did not hear  
The words I hope would never have been said  
Had he not seem'd so very near to death—  
Yet still, I also hope, that, had he heard  
And had he felt each re-awaken'd pulse,  
Throbbing triumphantly the knell of Death,  
He still had felt the laws of honor bade  
Him seem to die, when, had he seemed to live,



It had been difficult to live and spare—  
“The strong should e’er be merciful;” with him,  
He may have felt that weakness was the strength  
To which he might have ow’d a victory,  
And may have scorn’d to profit by those fears  
It may have seemed she all too fondly nursed—  
There are some things that are not known at once,  
And this is one ;—so let it be enough  
To say that Geoffrey Denzil did not die ;  
Tho’ stunn’d and bruised, and with a broken arm,  
He did not suffer any other ills,  
And ere pale Constance, with a languid step  
And downcast eyes, once more resumed the life  
Of ev’ry day, Denzil seem’d quite as strong  
And like his former self as he had been  
Before the Fire.

It was with many fears  
And coy misgivings, that his hostess clasp’d  
His outstretch’d hand (the *left*, the right one still  
Hung in a sling) the day when first they met.  
Her voice was trembling, and a guilty blush  
O’erspread her faded cheek—she did not dare  
To meet his eye, all was to her so changed—  
He did not seem the Geoffrey of the Past,

Nor did she feel as once that Constance felt  
Whose love was innocent.

He spoke the first,  
She thought his voice had never seem'd so cold,  
So calm, so measured, studied and polite—  
(I feel assured he had not heard her words—)  
He spoke to her with all that careless ease  
She long'd to borrow ; this, his icy tone,  
Restored at last her courage, tho' she felt  
A pang of disappointment at her heart,  
(That tender erring heart that so had beat  
And ached, and almost broken for his sake !)  
Sir John explain'd that Denzil, not content  
With saving Roland from a fiery death,  
Had added newer cause for thanks, and wish'd  
That she, Sir John, his sister and the boy,  
Should stay at Denzil, till at Farleigh Court  
The ravages by fire and water wrought  
Had been repair'd ; Sir John, who saw in this  
Only the kindness which a friend on friend  
Would willingly confer, agreed to go,  
And so, as soon as Constance should be well,  
'Twas thus arranged. At first she did not know  
How to confront a change so sudden, made

Without her knowledge, and unsought by her—  
To dwell within the precincts of his home,  
To see around her all the thousand things  
Which needs must breathe of him, to live with him  
In this new, even closer intimacy,  
Just after she had wrested from her heart  
Its fatal secret—was this wise or right?  
Yet how could she protest? What should she say?  
How could she meet him as she used of yore?  
Unconsciously she had recourse to pray'r,  
And lifting up her heart, she pray'd that God  
Would grant her strength to fight the Pow'rs of Ill.

But as she stood and stammer'd out her thanks,  
And fear'd that they, (so many) might, as guests,  
(And for so long,) prove inconvenient—  
Denzil explained, that even could it be  
That such might be the case another time,  
Yet now it would be otherwise. "Indeed,"  
He said, "the kindness will be all your own,  
"It will be good of you to keep my house  
"Well air'd and cared for whilst I am away;  
"Next week I start for Germany."

Away!

So he was going from her ! . Ah, how soon  
The fears about the safety of her soul  
Vanished before this terrible surprise !  
So he was going—ah, then God was kind—  
(Too kind !) but what a weary sunless life !  
He did not love—he was so calm and cold,  
And she could well have learnt to school her heart—  
She could, at least, have seen him ev'ry day ;  
But now apart, with land and sea between,  
And dangers, distance, adverse winds, and Time  
To drive him further from her ! . . . .

But 'twas well,  
And God was merciful, and helping her.

Here Denzil said his horse was at the door ;  
“ There are some things to settle ere I go,”  
He said to Constance, and before her heart  
Could realize that this was his farewell—  
This cold left-handed parting, he was gone,  
And Constance was alone.

(I feel assured  
He had not heard the tender words she said  
When she believed him dying ; I am glad.)

Oh, love ! thou who shelt'rest some  
    'Neath thy wings so white and warm,  
        Wherefore on a bat-like wing  
All disguisèd did'st thou come  
    In so terrible a form ?  
        As a dark forbidden thing,  
As a demon of the air—  
    As a sorrow and a sin,  
        Wherefore cam'st thou thus to me,  
As a tempter and a snare ?  
    When the heart that beats within  
        This, my bosom, warm'd to thee,  
Was it from a love of sinning,—  
    From a fatal love of wrong,  
        From a wish to shun the light ?  
Nay ! I swear at the beginning  
    Had'st thou sung an angel's song,—  
        Had this wrong thing been the right,  
Thou had'st seem'd as worth the winning  
    And with will as firm and strong  
        I had lov'd with all my might !



“ Un jour tu sentiras peut-être  
 Le prix d'un cœur qui nous comprend,  
 Le bien qu'on trouve à le connaître  
 Et ce qu'on souffre en le perdant.”

(*Alfred de Musset.*)

“ I gang like a ghaist, and I care na to spin,  
 I daur na think on Jamie, for that wad be a sin ;  
 But I'll do my best a gude wife aye to be,  
 For Auld Robin Gray he is sae kind to me.”

(“ *Auld Robin Gray*,” by LADY ANNE LINDSAY.)

#### IV.

SO it was over ! Love had come to her  
 All unsuspected, in her harmless youth,  
 But hardly had she known that it was he  
 Before his wings were spread and he was gone.  
 Oh, desolation !—All the hopeless train  
 Of new emotions, hitherto unguess'd,

Crowded upon my hapless heroine—  
The mystery of silence, and the love  
Of solitude to brood—to brood on what?  
The guilty blush, the forced and ghastly smile,  
The fears, the pray'rs, the vain delusive hopes,  
For what? For whom? To what ungodly end?  
Oh, Misery! oh, Death! and yet, (oh, Shame!)  
Strange mingling of the bitter and the sweet!  
Oh, treasure newly found! oh, priceless pearl!  
Oh, Life! oh, Love!

These were the chequer'd thoughts  
That made of Constance such a guilty thing,  
An alter'd woman, pale, and wrapp'd in dreams,—  
A lovely shadow of her former self.  
Ah, now she learnt so many hidden things!—  
The secret of the bird's soft even-song,  
And what the winter wind at midnight said—  
The sympathetic, dumb companionship  
Of Nature, with her blessèd haunted shades  
And empty shrines! The sward that lately bow'd  
Each happy little blade beneath *his* tread,—  
The seat where once they sat—the target still  
Stabbed with his certain arrow in the gold—  
(There was another target from whose core



Upsprung a pointed poison'd random dart !)—  
Ah, what a history in ev'rything !  
And that same sun, and that calm careless moon,  
Rising and setting as they used of yore,  
But lighting with their radiance a world  
Seeming so dark and different to her !

But tho' to Constance as a dread surprise  
Had come this sudden wakening to truth,  
Yet there were many who had prophesied  
This fatal ending to a friendship form'd  
Against the rules of Prudence.

Round about  
The tatt'ling neighbours oft had smiled to meet  
Upon the dusty mile of highway road  
Which separated Denzil from Sir John's,—  
The eager horseman, making for the lodge  
Of Farleigh Court, and often had they sigh'd  
With many a gloomy presage, when they saw  
The pony-carriage with the dappled greys  
Driven by Constance, who with rod and line,  
Or else with sketch-book, pencils, and camp-stool,  
Was going to fish or sketch in Denzil Park.

Roland was there, of course, but then they thought  
Of all the tender nothings one may say  
Before a child ; or how so slight a check  
Might even serve to fan the torch of Love—  
Their ready minds imagined many words  
Wrapp'd up in metaphor, or said in French,  
Italian, German, of so many tongues  
Denzil was master—surely some of these  
Might even mystify poor dear Sir John  
If spoken as tho' quoted from a book—  
Ah, then those books ! a language in themselves !  
Accomplices in crime ! The subtle mark  
Beneath those passages that breathe of love !—  
The Lancelots and guilty Guineveres—  
All their forbidden converse underlined—  
The Fausts and Marguerites, and Héloïse  
And Abelard, Francesca—all the throng  
Of wicked lovers and illicit loves !  
Nay, they might almost spare themselves the pains  
Of even this, and use the English tongue,  
And it would seem the same to good Sir John  
As Hebrew or Chaldean—such to him  
The language of the poet or the flow'r,—  
The cunning compliment—the tender glance,

Who was so simple, thick-headed and good !  
Why, they might almost squeeze their guilty hands  
Beneath his honest nose, and he remain  
As blind as was that husband in the tale  
Of Pope and Chaucer, ere he had his sight  
Too suddenly restored. How much they pray'd  
That poor Sir John might not awaken thus !

So did the scandal-loving neighbourhood  
Gossip and slander ; many shook their heads  
On hearing Constance had been ill, and much  
They whisper'd and surmised when they were told  
How she and good Sir John had gone to stay  
At Denzil ; but this fact, somehow, became  
Shorn of all interest when soon they learnt  
That Geoffrey Denzil had departed, bound  
For foreign lands. It seem'd a cruel thing  
That he should go away just at the time  
When they foresaw a "thick'ning of the plot !"   
But still they did their best, and soon they wove  
The fears and tremors which poor Constance felt  
Into some sentimental malady  
Connected with his absence.—One old man  
Who had a wicked twinkle in his eye,

At a dull local dinner, with a leer  
Inquired facetiously *which* fire had caused  
Lady L'Estrange's illness ? that one lit  
By Mr. Denzil, or the lesser one  
He help'd extinguish ? All his list'ners here  
Titter'd convulsively, and one of them  
Call'd him a "naughty, odious, funny man."

But Constance did not hear these calumnies  
(Having, alas, a fatal grain of truth !)—  
Those envious voices did not penetrate  
The tangled brakes of Denzil Park, which rose  
Bird-haunted, flower starr'd, a leafy screen  
Between the idle whisp'ring world and her.

'Twas early spring-time, all the eager buds  
Were pressing into life, as on that day  
Three years ago, when Constance, like a child,  
Came smiling hither, playing hide and seek—  
Thinking to cull the earliest snow-drop flow'r,  
Or find the first four blue hedge-sparrow's eggs,—  
Seeking for these, she came, and met her Fate,—  
Hoping and seeking now (against her will)  
To meet some trace of him who was her Fate

She wander'd listlessly, and found but these  
The early eggs of happy mated birds  
And the first snow-drop, looking like that one  
Three years ago ; but had it been the same,  
And had its hanging head concealed an eye,  
That little peeping modest eye had mark'd  
The change wrought in those white and trembling hands  
That cull'd so tenderly its transient bloom !

Alas, for snow-drop immortality !—  
The same to careless eyes, yet not the same,—  
Heir to the drooping head and fragile stem,—  
Heir to the chaste traditions of the race—  
Emblem to trusting hearts of those below'd  
Whose sleeping bodies, wrapp'd in silent clay,  
Await the second wakening to life,  
To rise like these fair blossoms, from a dark  
Mysterious imprisonment ! Ah, who  
May say if this long-cherish'd metaphor  
Which Spring each year renews, is, as a whole,  
Perfect, or but a visionary hope  
Begot of Faith and Love ? Ah, true indeed  
The wondrous resurrection of the flow'r,—  
The flow'r of kin, the fragrant heir-in-fee,

But not, alas, *that flow'r* of bygone Spring  
Which, brown and faded, lies between the leaves  
Of some old book, a soulless scentless thing,  
Wither'd as those dear hands, maybe, that cull'd  
Its dead forgotten blossom ! Ah *that flow'r*,  
*That very flow'r !* Grant me the grace to know,—  
To understand the subtle second life  
Which was not crush'd, when on its pearly youth  
Closed those dim pages like a living tomb !

But to sad Constance, fill'd with trusting faith,  
Came no such wistful musings ;—in her eyes  
The pointed petals rising from the earth  
Were emblems of the pure immortal soul  
Aspiring heavenwards ; those snowy leaves  
Seem'd like the folded wings of patient saints  
Waiting the signal of the April show'r  
To spread themselves in glorious disproof  
Of sophistry, above the empty graves  
Of their awaken'd hearts ; and thus she watch'd  
Sadly, but trustfully, the coming Spring.

Within the house, upon the panell'd walls  
Hung many portraits, and in some of these

Constance at times perceiv'd, (or deemed she did,)—  
Some turn of eyebrow, or some flash of eye,—  
Some curl of hair or pointed cut of beard,  
Recalling that last scion of the house  
Who occupied so much her wand'ring thoughts.  
On these she often dwelt, and o'er and o'er  
Spelt their departed names, and lov'd to trace  
That fancied likeness to her absent host ;  
Till by and bye these ancestors became  
As friends, who seem'd to understand her heart—  
She knew them all, and to her dying day  
Might have been question'd as to names and dates,  
Nor made a single blunder.

First there came  
The first Lord Denzil, of Queen Mary's reign,  
Attainted, and beheaded in the Tow'r,  
(A man of fifty, with a pointed beard,  
Wearing a scarlet skull-cap, clad in black.)—  
His eldest son, a lad of seventeen—  
In breast-plate and buff coat, (an early tomb  
Awaited him, for, falling from his horse,  
He died before his still more luckless sire.)—  
Then ladies, ruff'd and starch'd and farthingaled,  
Imprison'd in their pearl-strewn stomachers

So stiff, they surely scarcely could have breathed !  
(Alas, where are they now, those Orient pearls  
Sewn with such lavish prodigality  
Over the dresses of our grandmothers ?  
Some pear-shaped, dropping from their tender ears,  
And others in magnificent festoons  
Hanging about their shoulders ?—

Pearls like these

The ladies of my family possess'd—  
Witness their portraits, did they pawn or sell  
Or melt them, like dark Egypt's Queen, in wine,—  
A toast to some more modern Anthony  
In doublet and trunk-hose ? or else did they—  
They or their thriftless, careless handmaidens,  
Break all the strings, and let them roll away  
Like common beads, under the rugs and chairs,  
Being so large and round ? Ah, had they but  
(To use a billiard phrase) had "legs enough"  
To roll a little further—down to me !)—  
Then came the beetle brows of one Sir Guy  
With his two brothers, oblong, in a row,  
Their heads in profile, whilst his own, in full  
Scowled at poor Constance as she gazed on him.—  
Ev'rard and Ralph came next, who both died young,

And then a *Geoffrey*; Constance read the name,  
It seem'd to ease the aching of her heart  
To see those letters, painted in in white  
Beneath the coat of arms ! Unfortunate  
This Geoffrey was, he died at Naseby field  
Fighting for Charles, whilst on the other side  
His brother Hugh fought under Oliver,  
(Alas for Civil War, which brothers thus  
Could "Cain and Abel-ify"! but so it was.)  
Then simp'ring dames, artistically draped,  
Each holding betwixt thumb and fore finger  
A spray of jess'mine,—painted at the time  
When ev'ry lady seem'd to dress in blue,—  
Next, all bewigged, and with his hanging sleeves,  
She saw another Ralph, a Jacobite,  
On whom King James, when he had fled to France,  
Bestow'd some "barren honors." Next to these  
There came the days of powder and of paint,  
Patch, pig-tail, petticoat and high-heel'd shoe,  
And so they glided downwards, to the days  
Remember'd by the living, and the last  
Of all the line was Geoffrey's grandfather  
Playing the violin, beneath a bust  
Of sage Minerva—by his side the globes

Of Earth and Heaven. He was known to Fame  
As a mild poet of the night-cap school,  
He also held an office at the Court,  
And prosper'd, wrote, and fiddled till he died,  
The only lucky Denzil. "And a fool."—  
(So Geoffrey said, half jealous of the praise  
Monopolized by this weak forefather,  
Who wrote a poem, call'd "The Birth of Love,"  
Which, as some compensation for the ills  
His house had will'd the House of Hanover,  
He dedicated with a fulsome pen  
Dipp'd more in milk and water than in ink,  
To the plain-headed tho' deserving Queen  
Of George the Third, in which she was compared  
To Venus, and the Prince of Wales to Love.)

But what to Constance seem'd the dearest thing  
Was a fair little boy who held a dog,—  
Painted some five-and-twenty years ago  
In water colours : very badly drawn,  
Having a prim white frock and sky-blue sash ;  
His little hoop and stick were lying near,  
And in the distance there was Denzil Place—  
This funny little picture had no name,—

The little fair-hair'd boy was like a doll,  
Or still more like all other little boys  
In any other badly finish'd sketch ;  
Yet Constance lov'd it—it was small and light,  
Easy to move, and so she took it down  
From off its nail, and brought that little boy  
To dwell where she might see him, in her room.

Her room ! it had been Geoffrey Denzil's once,  
She had not known it, choosing it by chance  
Because from out its windows she could see  
So fair a landscape—woods and grassy slopes,  
And nearer, when she look'd towards the left,  
The arch'd beginning of the avenue,  
Dusk with its over-hanging evergreens  
E'en in the leafless seasons of the year—  
This chamber, on the basement of the house,  
Open'd upon a spacious corridor,  
And at one end of this, three steps led down  
Into the dim, low, silent library  
Which Constance lov'd, for here besides the books  
(She lov'd to read,) were rang'd upon the floor  
Some four or five square cases, made of tin,  
Dark-color'd, and on these, in letters white,

Constance devour'd, with eager hungry eyes  
The name she lov'd, despite of all the shame  
Such love might bring her. She would close the doors  
On chilly afternoons and sit alone,  
Feasting her eyes on those belovèd words :  
This "*Geoffrey Henry Denzil, Denzil Place*"  
Was comfort to her at this dreary time,  
And here she used to read and write and dream,  
And try forgetting, or in rasher moods  
Try to remember ev'ry line and tone  
Of vanish'd features or of silent voice.

For she was very lonely in these days  
Of early Spring : Sir John and Miss L'Estrange  
Went almost daily to inspect the works  
At Farleigh Court, where builders, whitewashers,  
And painters, all were busied with repairs.  
Constance would often watch them as they pass'd  
Under her windows o'er the swampy lawn  
After the rain ; her husband's stalwart form,  
Upright and hale, despite his sixty years,  
And Miss L'Estrange, who, clinging to his arm,  
Trudged with the brisk flat-footed energy  
Of wither'd spinsterhood, and keeping step

With his more manly stride, thro' wind and rain<sup>1</sup>  
Accompanied Sir John. As in a dream  
Constance would watch them, wave a languid hand,  
And with a shiver turn towards the fire ;—  
Time was when she could also breast the storm  
And brave the struggles of encroaching Spring  
With unrelenting Winter, but those times  
Were changed, and now she shudder'd as she gazed  
On mist and sleet ; so, when the days were cold  
She stay'd within the doors of Denzil Place.

Roland had gone to School ; she often wrote  
And said “ Ah, how I miss you dear, dear boy !  
“ The place is different—it all seems changed—  
“ Now you are gone”—and even as she wrote  
She tried to think it was indeed the loss  
Of him, her youthful playmate, made her sad.

One day as she was writing in her room,  
And listlessly consid'ring what to say,—  
What news she had to tell the absent boy,  
To write of which might serve to lure her mind  
From one sad thought ; and as she dreamily  
O'eturn'd the pages of the writing-book,  
She started suddenly, and seem'd to wake

To newer life, for she had found a trace—  
An unexpected trace of him she lov'd.

There on a scrap of paper, partly torn,  
She read these words, in Geoffrey Denzil's hand :  
" At last. It almost seems too hard to bear—  
" But so it is, and I must go from hence."  
She look'd, and on the scarce used blotting-book  
Perceiv'd some straggling and uncertain lines  
Illegible, (if she had tried to read,)  
Save where her timid, hesitating eye  
Espied the curling crescent of a "C,"  
And knew her name had once been blotted there.  
Why did he go away? What was so "hard"—  
" Almost too hard to bear" (she thought,) "for *him*?"  
But whilst she mused, her self-accusing heart  
Dared not delude itself with such a doubt.  
A hundred trivial unimportant things  
Flash'd to her memory, in each of which  
She seem'd to read a hidden meaning now,—  
She *knew*, and all her aching lonely heart  
Went out to Geoffrey Denzil over-sea.  
Next day an agèd dame, the housekeeper,  
(Once Geoffrey's nurse,) knock'd gently at the door,

Said some half-dozen kind maternal words  
About her health, then took the blotting-book  
And lock'd it up, and Constance felt as tho'  
A friend was gone. "Was Mr. Denzil well  
"Before he left?" she ask'd the kindly dame,  
"Yes, he seem'd well, but moody—he was odd—  
"The Denzils all were odd in all their ways—  
"Incomprehensible ;—his father odd,  
"Incomprehensible,"—(and here the dame  
Mutter'd a homely Athanasian Creed  
About the family she serv'd so long)—  
"Before he left," she said, "he wrote in here  
"Near half the night ; he made a kind of Will—  
"(They are so strange !) and then he sent for me  
"And told me what to do when he was dead—  
"He gave me then two letters,—one for Prince  
"(The country lawyer here) and one for you—  
"He said, my lady, if I died before  
"(As well I hope I may !) your letter then  
"Was to be sent to Prince, and so to you,  
"I think 'tis something touching the entail  
"Of this estate ; Sir John, you know, is heir  
"To all that part his kinswoman brought in  
"As dowry ; but Sir John is likely soon

“To go, my dear, the way of younger men,—  
“ (Don’t look down-hearted,) Mr. Roland then,  
“ If master does not marry, has it next,  
“ And this is something telling you of that—  
“ Maybe you’ll never know if master lives,  
“ As aye I pray he may.” “ I pray he may,”  
Poor Constance echo’d.

So, he thought of her  
On that last ev’ning he had passed at home  
Before his voluntary exile thence !—  
This sacred chamber, where she sat and wept,  
Knew all the secrets of that absent heart !  
Here had he written to her—here, maybe,  
Where she was standing now, a week ago  
(One little week !) he stood, and had his thoughts  
Wander’d to her above the fir-tree tops  
Over the silent rooks ? When all men slept  
He was awake, and writing in this room,  
And she, one little easy mile away,  
Was waking too, at Farleigh Court alone,  
Nursing the fatal secret of her love !

Ah, hapless Constance ! so, then, this was love—  
This was the master passion of the earth,

This was the envied blessing of the few,  
The common curse of the unfortunate !  
She saw before her now, without disguise,  
The outline of her uneventful life ;  
Till now, her lonely childhood, motherless—  
The handsome easy-going parish priest,  
Her father, who had fixed upon the Church  
As a profession, merely as a means  
Of livelihood for him, a younger son  
Of an impoverish'd house. His thriftless ways,  
His open-handed dealings with the poor  
“ Which saved much time and trouble ” (so he said,)  
And then his love of sport, his love of wine,  
His pressing debts, increasing poverty,  
And finally his illness and his death—  
And then she saw herself, a little girl  
With large appealing eyes, dress'd all in black,  
Taken to dwell with a stern kinswoman  
She could not love ; once more she seem'd to live  
In fancy, o'er those miserable days  
Of solitude and sadness ;—then she thought  
Of the first day she saw good kind Sir John  
With wrinkled rosy face, and genial laugh,  
And how, one day, he took her for a ride—

Lent her a horse, and used to cheer the house,  
And make a kinder woman of her Aunt  
Whene'er his honest footstep cross'd the door—  
And how, when she was only seventeen,  
He drove her Aunt and her to Farleigh Court,  
Where, in the billiard-room he question'd her  
If she admired the place? She said she did,  
"So beautiful, so grand, the rooms so large."  
"Well, why not live here!" kind Sir John exclaim'd,  
Then hemm'd and haw'd, whilst on his cheek the red  
Grew redder; then, with apoplectic snort,  
He hurried from the room, and Constance stood  
Bewilder'd at his words, tho' guessing nought  
Of their intended meaning.

Up and down  
She roll'd the white and color'd billiard-balls—  
(She yet could hear the harmless 'cannoning,'  
And still more harmless 'kisses' that they made  
These three unconscious witnesses to what  
So chang'd her life!) Then by and bye her Aunt  
Enter'd the room, and open'd wide her arms,  
Enfolding to an unaccustom'd kiss  
The fair astonish'd girl. Sir John stood near  
Smiling and gibb'ring, in a whirl of hope

And doubting diffidence ; and next she thought  
Of how (all ignorant of what they meant,  
Those marriage vows, either to bind or break).  
She went to church in white, and how the way  
Was strewn with flow'rs, and how she pass'd the grave  
Of her dead father, and the wish she felt  
That he could see his daughter's happiness.  
*Her happiness !* ah, bitter mockery !  
Since then her heart had fathom'd many truths :  
She knew that bitterest of bitter things  
(As says a German writer) not to feel  
So much the pangs of sorrow, as to guess  
The unsuspected happiness we miss'd !

Yet could she be so heartless as to wrong,  
Even in thought, this generous old man  
Who took her from the dull monotony  
Of her desponding youth ? He had perform'd  
All he had vow'd, she could alone deplore  
Her own shortcomings ! If he had but been  
Her father, or her uncle, or her friend—  
How she had lov'd him then ! but now, alas,  
Upon her guilty head each kindness fell  
Like coals of fire ! But she would do her best,

And if she could not love him as she ought,  
At least her wretched heart would pray for strength  
To fight against this other alien love !—  
And so she pray'd, and register'd a vow  
That she would cast away for evermore  
This fatal snare, and strive to be to him  
(Her husband) such a wife as she had hoped,  
Before she knew the meaning of the words  
“ Love, honor, and obey.”

Alas, for these—

The vows of mortals vowing not to love !  
At which, I wonder, do the mocking gods  
Smile most—at these, or at those rasher vows  
To love eternally ! Alas, that both  
Should be so often but as sounding brass  
And tinkling cymbal ! The relentless Fates  
Are weaving, as we swear, the tangled webs  
Of a deceitful dim Futurity  
Into a galling everlasting chain,  
Or snipping with their scissors the last link  
Of what we deem'd would fetter us for life !  
Ah, will they change their pre-concerted plan  
And shift the web to what should be the woof  
At sight of pray'rs and tears, and wringing hands ?

I dare not say, but Constance, as she pray'd,  
Felt happier and calmer—o'er her stole  
A dreary resignation, wrapp'd in which  
As in a garment, still she wept and pray'd.



Oh, under my breast I can feel it still  
My foolish heart that is throbbing yet—  
Whilst his horse's hoofs from the distant hill  
Seem to echo the words "Forget ! forget !

" Forget,—for 'I lov'd but I ride away'  
" So rise and forget me and dry your tears,  
" For the words that I whisper'd were easy to say,  
" And the love must be strong that will weather the years!"

*Forget?* ah, forget me my fair false love—  
Forget me, the courser that speeds on the wind,  
Forget all the fancies my poor heart 'wove—  
The dreams and the hopes that you leave behind !

But you, my love, I can never forget,  
And so be you false, or so be you true,  
The seal of your kiss on my soul is set  
And this heart that is beating is beating for you !



“ Ask me no more : thy fate and mine are seal’d,  
 I strove against the stream and all in vain ;  
 Let the great river take me to the main :  
 No more, dear love, for at a touch I yield ;  
 Ask me no more.”

TENNYSON.

“ Ce que les poètes appellent l’Amour, et les moralistes  
 l’Adultère.”

ERNEST FEYDEAU.

## V.

WHAT is it makes the silent hours of night  
 So sad, so desolate, to those who love ?  
 It cannot be because in lieu of sun,  
 A paler planet sails aloft in heav’n ;  
 Or that the firmament is prick’d with stars—  
 Is it, maybe, when half the drowsy world  
 Are made oblivious by the chains of sleep  
 To grief, and joy, and love, that thro’ some strange

Mysterious compensating natural law,  
The other half of human kind, who wake,  
Made doubly sensitive, with keener force  
Feel those emotions which the sleeping world  
Forget in dreams ?

Outside the diamond panes  
Of the bay-window'd room where Constance sat  
One night in early March, the tempest howled  
With all the fury of the Equinox ;  
Whene'er the wind abated, in a show'r  
Of stinging sleet, the noisy midnight rain  
Beat on the window. Now and then the fire  
(By which she linger'd reading) hissed and smoked  
As down the chimney, driven by the wind  
There fell a hailing handful of the storm.

Constance had long been reading, now she paused,  
Push'd back her hair, and softly sighing, closed  
The finish'd second volume of her book.  
The house was silent—the tempestuous voice  
Of the conflicting elements without  
Made the dim chamber where she sat alone  
Seem doubly desolate. A thrill of fear,  
She knew not why, crept over ev'ry sense,

(A feeling difficult to realize  
In daylight, but which oftentimes at night  
Hath chill'd the blood in braver hearts than her's)—  
Thinking to scare away this haunting shade  
Of an invisible terror, one by one  
She lit the candles, stirr'd the dying fire,  
And strove to summon fear-dispelling thoughts ;  
As thus she ponder'd, suddenly there rose  
The long-denied and heart-forbidden dream,  
Flashing across her mind ; she seem'd to hear  
• With sad distinctness ev'ry silent tone  
Of that dear voice—that well remember'd face  
Arose so plainly to her memory  
She long'd to call upon this shadow-man  
To speak—to move, to show himself indeed  
To her expectant eyes !

It was as tho'

The room was full of Geoffrey—all the air  
Seem'd heavy with his presence, tho' unseen  
It was as if his spirit hover'd near—  
So near it seem'd, that o'er her heart a dread  
Crept like an icy blast, for she had heard  
That oftentimes ere mortals leave the earth  
Their spirits hover thus a little while,

Making the influence of their presence felt  
By those who lov'd them ; oh, if he had died !  
If somewhere far away, with land and sea  
And mountain-ridges rising up between  
Their sunder'd hearts, his thoughts had turned to her,  
And thro' some subtle nameless agency  
His soul, upon the wings of his desire  
Had flown to nestle near her, ere it rose  
Above all human loves ? In vain she tried  
To wake some more substantial train of thought  
Instead of this unreasonable dread  
Of the impossible. Alas, her book,  
(A simple story of a city life—  
The wholesome history of honest toil,  
Inventions, strivings after modest fame  
Amongst the smoke of London,) she had read.  
It was a book the very thought of which  
Would exorcise perforce all foolish fears  
Of midnight phantoms, bringing as it did  
Such unromantic scenes of common life  
Before the mind, unsentimental—real—  
She took it up, and listlessly turn'd o'er  
The pages she had read, then starting up  
Bethought her that the third last volume lay

Upon the sofa in the library  
Where she had left it with her worsted work  
Some hours ago—

She almost fear'd to pass  
In her "uncanny" superstitious mood  
The row of staring Denzils on the walls  
Of the deserted corridor, but yet  
Knowing how foolish were such childish fears,  
She wrapp'd herself in a long flowing robe  
Which made her seem herself a lovely ghost,  
And taking up her candle, flitted thro'  
The quiet passage—down the flight of stairs,  
And pushing noiselessly the oaken doors  
She glided quickly thro' the silent room  
To where she saw the volume of her book.

As she advanced she heard a rustling sound,  
At first she thought "it is the midnight wind  
"Driving against the dripping window-ledge  
"Some spray of ivy," then, her heart stood still,  
And all her life's warm blood seem'd turn'd to ice  
As she beheld, not far from where she stood,  
The stooping figure of a man, who knelt  
Carefully searching thro' the title-deeds

And papers which an iron case contain'd  
Mark'd with the much lov'd name.

“A thief!” she thought,  
And stood amazed and petrified with fear—  
Tho' speechless, from her terror-stricken lips  
Escaped a gasp of horror—then the man  
Rose to his feet, and look'd her in the face— . . . .  
She utter'd one low incoherent cry  
And fainting, fell in Geoffrey Denzil's arms.

. . . . .  
When she recover'd consciousness, her head  
Was resting on his breast—against her own  
His cheek was press'd, and on her mouth she felt  
The ardent lips of her too well-belov'd  
Kissing her back to life, and heard his words  
Thrill thro' her being, as he murmur'd thus—

“My love, my life! my love whom I have lov'd  
So long, so tenderly, ah, look at me!  
Speak to me! say again those blissful words  
You said when you believ'd I heard them not!”  
(So, he had heard!) “Ah, darling, ere I go  
“Leaving behind me all I love so well,  
“Oh, let me know that she who is to me

“ Far dearer than is aught on earth—in heav’n—  
“ Has been to me but once my very own !  
“ Surely the marriage vows we may not break  
“ Are such as our’s had been if God had will’d  
“ That we had met before, and now could live  
“ Join’d heart and soul and body, till we died—  
“ God knows that I have wrestled with my love  
“ As Jacob with the angel, or as man  
“ May wrestle with a fiend sent here to tempt  
“ His soul astray, I tore myself from home  
“ And only came to it again by stealth  
“ As would a thief, so that I might not meet  
“ So sweet a snare as lurks in these dear eyes—  
“ But now some stronger, some more subtle pow’r  
“ Than I possess, has will’d that we should meet  
“ Here in the dead of night, where none can see,  
“ In this deserted room, now face to face  
“ I find my love alone—I hold her fast—  
“ Ah, can I be of earth—of flesh and blood—  
“ Can I be mortal man, and let her go ?”

“ Geoffrey, have mercy !” ’twas an anguish’d cry  
As of a terror-stricken hind at bay,  
As, all defenceless, lock’d in his embrace

She strove to thrust away his eager lips,  
Feeling his hot breath on her trembling cheek  
And in amongst her loosely knotted hair,  
And the wild beating of his desperate heart  
Out-throbbing her's.

Alas, her strength was gone !

As a long pent-up river breaks its banks  
And rushes madly onward to the sea,  
So did the heart of Constance overleap  
Its breastwork of resolves, uprais'd with tears  
And many pray'rs, and heedless as the stream  
Rush'd on to meet the ocean of his love,  
To mingle with it, sinking soul and sense  
In those enchanted waters.

. . . . .

By and bye

A noise as of a gently closing door  
Made Geoffrey start ; Constance, as one entranced,  
Lay passive in the prison of his arms,  
Feeling some new delicious languor steal  
Over her senses, blinding, deafening,  
A " death in life."

" Some one is passing near,"

He whisper'd, " Darling, for the love of heav'n

See that you gain your chamber unobserv'd—  
I will not stay to work you harm, by morn  
I shall be miles away." She held his hand  
As tho' to let him guide her to the door,  
Then, turning, said as in a waking dream,  
Looking as pale and haggard as a ghost,  
"Remember me sometimes."

"My love, my life,  
"My only darling," Geoffrey cried, and press'd  
Once more his hungry loving lips to hers ;  
"I never can forget you whilst I live—  
"Good night—good-bye."

As a somnambulist  
Treads without seeing, so did Constance walk  
Towards her lonely chamber ; in the hearth  
A few expiring embers now and then  
Crack'd forth a sign of life. The candles still  
Were flick'ring, but a regiment of dwarfs  
Compared to what they had been when she left—  
This told her first she had been long away,  
For in her fever'd brain the flight of Time  
She could not calculate ;—so mad, so swift  
Were those enchanted moments ; yet a life,  
Nay more, it seem'd a whole eternity

Of wild emotion, passion, ecstasy,  
Had pass'd since those four tapers first were lit !

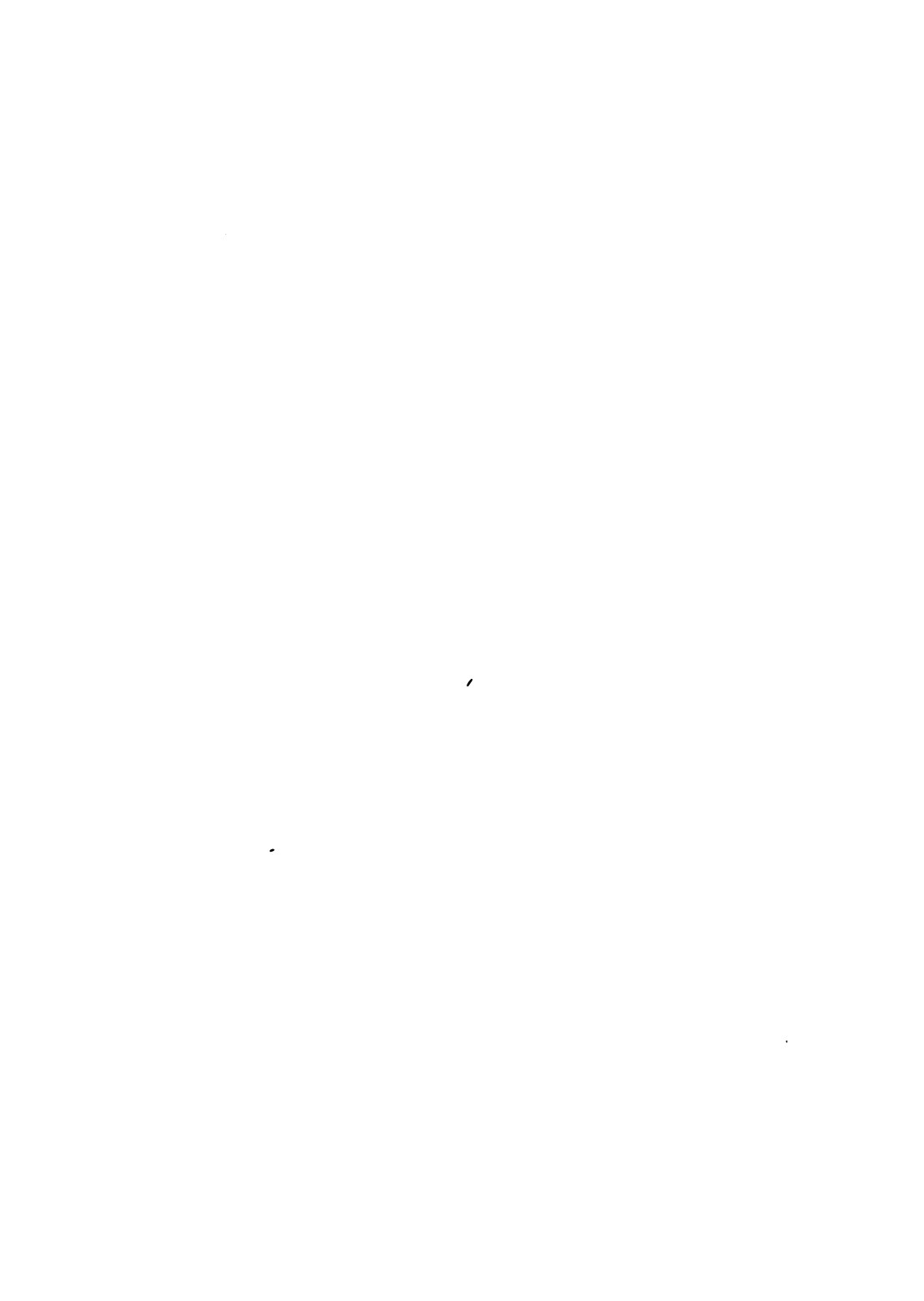
She saw some flow'rs she gather'd yesterday  
Unfaded, tho' it seemed so long ago,  
She went towards her glass half absently,  
And gazed and started, for her face looked changed—  
The air of child-like innocence was gone—  
She groan'd aloud, and falling on her knees  
She cover'd with her white and trembling hands  
What seem'd the fair accomplice of her guilt.

How long she thus remain'd she did not know,  
But when she saw the first faint struggling ray  
Of morning, dazed, and shivering with cold  
She rose from off her knees, look'd out, and saw  
A wintry sun rise on her new-born life,  
(For so it seem'd). Her flimsy dressing-gown  
Was blown aside, and the chill morning air  
Breathed on her heart, but still she stood, and look'd  
As might a statue. All at once she heard  
A sound as of a passing horse's hoofs—  
The laurels hid the rider, but she knew  
That it was Geoffrey, faithful to his word,

Tearing himself from England and from Love.  
Till then she had not analyzed her thoughts,  
They all had been so wild with self-reproach,  
But now an uncontrollable desire  
To follow him who "lov'd and rode away"  
Made her outstretch her empty aching arms  
Towards the spot wherefrom the dying sound  
Was now but faintly echo'd ; then to heav'n  
She raised them pleadingly, with clasping hands,  
And in her desolation cried aloud  
"God bless my darling wheresoe'er he goes !"



Dearest ! if we had never met  
Happier, perchance, had been my fate,  
Maybe the tear-drops would have wet  
My cheek less often than of late.  
My face would not have look'd a lie  
To hide the thoughts I dared not speak;  
Un sigh'd had been these sighs I sigh,  
Unblush'd these blushes on my cheek.  
Perchance my smile had been sincere,  
And life had seem'd an easy task,  
Ere Love had tempted me to wear  
This guilty ever-galling mask.  
This might have been, but 'tis not so,  
Ah, happier far if it had been !  
The fatal shaft has left the bow  
And hit a target unforeseen !  
It is not so ! And had it been ?  
Alas, had I to live again  
I would not sacrifice my love  
To save my soul an endless pain.  
I would not sacrifice for this  
That darken'd light's last ling'ring beams,  
Or lose the memory of a kiss  
Which now I only feel in dreams.  
And tho' this music of the Past  
May echo thro' succeeding years,  
Till smiles may learn to spring at last  
Out of the memory of tears.  
Yet would I die, if near thy heart  
I could but breathe my last fond vow,  
And kiss away on thy dear lips  
The life I do not value now !



“ Love, all defying love, who sees  
 No charm in trophies won with ease,  
 Whose rarest, dearest fruits of bliss  
 Are plucked on danger’s precipice !”

MOORE.

. . . . . “ Now, if this man should be  
 Vain, selfish, light, or hearted with a stone,  
 Or worthless any way, as there are many,  
 I’ve given myself, like alms unto an idiot,  
 To be for nothing squandered !”

T. L. BEDDOES.

## VI.

O H, lovers of all ages, kingdoms, climes,  
 How have you suffer’d ! What a motley crew  
 Would throng the earth could all your buried hordes  
 Collect from out the scatter’d dust of Time  
 And re-assume the human shapes you wore !  
 Yet, could you carry in your wither’d hands  
 Some record telling of the hopes and fears  
 That thrill’d you once, I ween that each of these

Would bear a closer semblance to the other  
Than would the fashion of your winding-sheets !  
The legend 'graven on the scarabee,—  
The pictured emblem of the Ninevite,—  
The roll of papyrus, held in the grasp  
Of the illustrious mummy,—all of these  
Translated, doubtless would resemble much  
Our modern hist'ries of despairing sighs,  
Or those still further from us,—tales of loves  
Antediluvian or præ-Adamite,  
When, haply, in the groves now fossilized,  
Haunted by monster Megatherium  
And Plesiosaurus, mortals liv'd and lov'd  
And sinn'd, as now they live and love and sin.

Granted that those can love whose eyes have been  
All ignorant of tears, whose kiss is bless'd  
By priestly benediction,—in whose lives  
A kindly heav'n has will'd that Love and Law  
Should be united : Duty and Desire,  
Honor and Happiness link'd hand in hand,  
Show'r gifts upon them, in their hours of bliss  
Should they but raise their eyes, they seem to see  
The wings of hov'ring angels, and the hosts

Of highest heav'n, with sweet approving smiles  
Joining the throbbing chorus of applause  
Wrung from their grateful bosoms.

These indeed

May love, and wherefore not? but what of those  
Who love despite the thunders of the just,  
Whose ev'ry heart ache, welcomed by the jeers  
Of mocking fiends, is chasten'd by the gods?  
Hide in thy bosom, poor unfortunate,  
That love which is thy torture and thy crime,  
Or cry aloud to those departed hosts  
Of ghostly lovers; can they be more deaf  
To thy disaster than the living world,  
Who with a careless smile will note the pain  
Caused by thy foolish self-inflicted wound?

When Constance 'woke after that fatal night,  
She thought at first " Ah, I have dream'd a dream  
Too terrible—too sweet !" then all at once  
The truth flash'd on her, crushing her with shame  
And self-abasement—yet to this was join'd  
So great a tenderness for him who wrought  
Her misery, that had she had but wings  
She would have flown to nestle in his breast.

She looked in consternation at the clock  
And saw with wonderment that it was noon.  
Fearing Sir John would question such delay  
She rang her bell, and hastily began  
To make amends for what would seem to him  
Unwonted indolence. Anon her maid  
Enter'd the room, and hoping she was well,  
Gave her two letters, one was from Sir John  
The other from his sister. "Both were gone  
(The girl explain'd) "to London, where Sir John  
"Had suddenly been summon'd whilst she slept,  
"He, knowing that my lady is not strong,  
"Had order'd that she should not be disturb'd,  
"But left these letters, telling her the cause  
"Of his departure."

Constance, too surprised  
To question her informant, broke the seals  
Of the two letters ; then she knew full well  
The reason she had been deserted thus  
As one plague-stricken, left to sigh alone.

She opened first the letter from Sir John  
With hands that trembled, and as in a dream  
She read these words—

“ Constance, I am too shock’d  
“ Even to contemplate or to bewail  
“ The fate I suffer—it has come to me  
“ So suddenly : enough that I know all—  
“ I will not torture you by saying more  
“ On what I feel you will repent in time—  
“ The many troubles that have come at once—  
“ The fire, and then this unexpected blow—  
“ Have shatter’d me in mind ;—this is my wish  
“ To spare you all I can of that disgrace  
“ Which needs must fall most heavily on you  
“ Who, I believe have wish’d to do the right—  
“ (How strong the dire temptation must have been  
“ Which led e’en you astray I dare not think !)  
“ This is my wish—that you should go to Town.  
“ (I send you money.) Say that I am there  
“ Summon’d in haste by business, and once there  
“ Leave England for awhile—I shall return  
“ And say your doctor sent you to the South—  
“ Be happy if you can—I cannot bear  
“ To meet you yet awhile—some day maybe—  
“ I do this for the honour of our house  
“ And for the little boy you used to love.  
“ Good-bye, God bless you, I can write no more.”

The other letter was a longer one.

“ Abandon’d woman ! ” (thus the words began,)

“ To-morrow I shall blush to think my pen

“ Could so pollute itself as spell your name !

“ Was it to bring disgrace upon our house

“ That you, a country parson’s pauper child

“ Should flirt and fawn and flatter till at last

“ You gain’d your selfish end, and made a man

“ Treble your age, your husband and your dupe ?

“ Maybe, the guilty partner of your crime

“ You ‘*fancied*’ ere you were my brother’s wife,

“ But he, more cunning, like all libertines,

“ Knowing at once the woman that you were

“ Was wiser than Sir John, whose simple mind

“ Judged others by himself.

“ Ah, well *he* knew

“ This Mr. Denzil, with his easy creed

“ And looser morals ! *He* was not your dupe !

“ These Atheists throw off beliefs themselves,

“ They cramp and fetter them, and act as bars

“ To their desires, but when they want a *wife*

“ They do not fasten on the like of you !

“ Somewhere, (for I am told that he has fled,)

“ He no doubt smiles in his deceitful sleeve

“ At you, his victim ! Ah, the noble part  
“ That he has acted ! All his fine ideas  
“ About his ‘ Honour ’ and the ‘ Love of Right ’  
“ His ‘ Adoration of the Beautiful ’  
“ The ‘ Liberty of Man ’ (ah, here indeed .  
“ He acted up to what he boldly preach’d  
“ If you are beautiful, as he is man !)  
“ But where was stow’d his ‘ *honour* ’ all these years—  
“ These three whole years, during the which, with you  
“ His neighbour’s wife, he liv’d in deadly sin ?  
“ Why, all the neighbourhood was rife with it !  
“ Your names were link’d together ev’ry where !  
“ The poor, who were too dull to understand  
“ The indiscretion lurking in their words  
“ Named your two names together ev’ry day,  
“ Your’s is a *bye word* ! All my brother’s house  
“ Have been respected since they came to dwell  
“ Here in this county, (nigh three hundred years,)  
“ And but for this, you would have seen ere now  
“ The scornful finger pointed as you pass’d  
“ By e’en those very grateful villagers  
“ You lov’d to patronize and queen it o’er !  
“ My brother wishes to protect you still  
“ From all the infamy you well deserve,

“ And hopes that you will go and dwell abroad  
“ Whilst he lives on in solitude—his lips  
“ Too generously silent. Thank your God  
“ You had a husband who could thus repay  
“ Your treachery and guilt! He knows it all—  
“ I watched you stealing to your paramour—  
“ (How many nights you thus have sought his side  
“ ’Twere vain to ponder on!) Ah, well conceiv’d  
“ Those midnight visits! All the servants bribed,  
“ The groom in ambush, waiting for the horse,  
“ The house door open’d with the master’s key!  
“ But not *so* well arranged but that the door  
“ Of that most horrid room was left ajar—  
“ (Long practice makes too bold, the pitcher oft  
“ Goes to the well and breaks the hundredth time!)  
“ Ah, if its walls could speak, what would they say,  
“ What tales of midnight orgie, foulest sin!  
“ (I shudder at the thought!) ’Twas there I saw  
“ As he was bidding you a last farewell,  
“ So close together your two guilty heads,  
“ I scarce could tell the hateful things apart—  
“ Whilst he was pressing on your lying lips  
“ His own, which doubtless scarcely yet were dry  
“ From kissing some such creature as yourself!

“ Ah, you are fairly match'd ! Go, seek him now,  
“ Implore his mercy, swear to be to him  
“ Truer than you have been to one more true,  
“ And list his answer ! He will cast you off  
“ And lower sinking, till the lowest scum  
“ Of human earth will scorn to mix with you,  
“ Your lonely life, fed with that poison, Sin,  
“ Must needs be short, and then, unlov'd, unmiss'd,  
“ Your soul will pass to the high judgment seat  
“ To meet its doom ; then will it be for me  
“ To pray that in those bitter latter days .  
“ You may be penitent, and that the heav'n  
“ You so have sinn'd against, may deal to you  
“ More mercy than your evil heart thought fit  
“ To mete to others, least of all to us !  
“ Nay, even now (to show my heart is free  
“ From thoughts of vengeance for your cruel wrong,  
“ And with the hope that I may make you feel  
“ The virtuous can wish the sinner well,  
“ I say, may God have mercy on your soul,  
“ And bless your exile with a lasting good  
“ Wrought to your spirit !  
“ With this earnest hope  
“ I sign myself yours truly, Jane L'Estrange.”

Constance had wept when she had read the first—  
The kind sad letter of her outraged lord  
But now she felt as is supposed to feel  
The worm that has been trampled till it turns,—  
The malice lurking in each spiteful line,  
The pent-up poison flowing from this pen,  
Let loose at last, as from the adder's tongue—  
The base injustice, the impatient wish  
Thus to exaggerate and multiply  
Her fault, all this directed at herself  
She did not dare resent—it was deserved—  
But what she felt she never could forgive  
Were those envenom'd arrows aim'd at him  
Her love, her life ; the angry crimson blood  
Rush'd to her cheek as she read o'er again  
Each bitter accusation. Well she knew  
That he had fallen from his high resolve,  
But then her heart would have it that he fell  
Fighting against some superhuman pow'r—  
A power he had striven with for years—  
She would not think that that belovèd form  
Concealed a cruel calculating heart  
Such as she heard had sometimes lurk'd beneath  
A mien deceptive. Yet these lying lines

So far impress'd her that her mind conceiv'd  
 That first intangible small germ of *Doubt*,  
 So bitter—so impossible to kill  
 In solitude, *his* tender lips alone  
 Could drive away the demon that these words  
 Had summon'd into life, and where was he?  
 “Ah, grant that I may see him once again,”  
 She pray'd, “That I may know these words are false  
 “And that his heart is true! My darling!”

Here,

(Had there been aught in *willing*,) Geoffrey's form  
 Had stood before the lady of his love,  
 Impeli'd by that divine affinity  
 Which triumphs over distance, death, and time,  
 But tho' her ardent spirit long'd and lov'd  
 He did not come, and Constance wept alone.

Then she bethought her how she oft had heard  
 Wise saws about the fickleness of men,  
 And how they love to pluck forbidden fruit,  
 And how, when tasted, they will fling away  
 What they have striven with such pains to grasp—  
 Or how a man will often in his heart  
 Despise the woman who will yield to him,

Loving some other, who is hard and cold  
And unrelenting ;—how upon the paths  
Of men like these, lie many faded flow'rs  
Strewn with the years, and trodden under foot,  
Loves of all shades and colours—many-voiced,  
With song-notes variable as the birds'  
By sunny shores, and under alien skies  
Beguiled and won. She sadly thought, " Alas !  
" I may be such a little thing to him—  
" A passing thought—a moment's light caprice,  
" Whilst he is, oh, so very much to me !"

Then sadly she prepared her to depart,  
An outcast and an exile ; first she tore  
Into a thousand fragments, which she burnt,  
The hated letter. With a sinking heart  
She bade a sad farewell to ev'ry spot  
She lov'd so well. The garden she explored,  
And gather'd from each glossy evergreen  
A dear memento—laurel, box, and fir,  
Cypress and rosemary, and one dark spray  
Of sad funereal yew, to which there clung  
A single waxen berry ; these she bound  
Into a garland, and thereon she wrote

“ This wreath of leaves was gather’d in the garden  
“ Of Eden ;—to be kept for evermore.”

She did not know, who had not seen as yet  
The bright luxuriant gardens of the South  
How little like the fancied fields of Heav’n  
This one would seem in an Italian’s eyes,  
Accustom’d to behold in his own land  
Such blaze of blossom—such a brilliant sun !  
But unto her it seemed as tho’ the doors  
Were closed upon some earthly paradise,  
As soon as swung the heavy iron gates  
Of Denzil Park, behind the speeding wheels  
Of the old-fashion’d carriage, on the morn  
She and her maid departed on their way—  
So much she lov’d the home that was his home,  
The sacred spot where she had seen him first.

Her maid, who watch’d her shyly, wonder’d why  
Lady L’Estrange’s eyes were fill’d with tears,  
When she herself was all too pleas’d to leave  
The dull old mansion and the tiresome trees  
Of dismal Denzil, and to go to Town,  
But Constance felt as if her heart would break,  
“Good-bye” she thought, “Dear trees, dear shaded walks,

“ Earth that his feet have trod—good-bye, good-bye !  
“ Good-bye, old house, where he was born and bred,  
“ Where he may dwell some day, and some day die,  
“ Home of the buried fathers of my love !”

Thus Constance quitted silent Denzil Place,  
To face that stern relentless outer world  
Of which she knew so little. Never more  
For her those gates unfasten'd ;—ne'er again  
Fell her light footstep on the polish'd floors,  
Nor were the dim old oaken panell'd walls  
Flatter'd again by that sweet flitting shade  
Caressing them. The old house stands and waits,  
And all its windows look like straining eyes  
Watching for Constance,—for the fairy thing  
That suddenly became identified  
With its moth-eaten records of the Past.  
Ah, never more ! those windows wait in vain,  
'Thro' all the changing years she will not come,  
No more her sunny head and wistful eyes  
Will grace the empty open window-frames !  
She came and went, as vanishes a dream,  
And the old house is waiting her in vain.

## PART II.



## PART II.

—:0:—

“ The angels, not half so happy in heaven  
Went envying her and me ;  
Yes ! that was the reason (as all men know  
In this Kingdom by the sea,)   
That the wind came out of the cloud by night  
Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love  
Of those who were older than we—  
Of many far wiser than we ;  
And neither the angels in heaven above  
Nor the demons down under the sea  
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul  
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee.”

EDGAR ALLAN POE.



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Oh, lost and lov'd, and gone before !  
I look and long with tearful eyes  
For what will come to me no more,  
The summer warmth of southern skies,  
The sunny waves that rise and swell  
And seem to me at times as near  
As those that echo in a shell  
Held to a child's attentive ear,  
Oh, lost and lov'd ! The magic thread  
That binds my heart to scenes like these  
Shines not alone from radiance shed  
Thro' golden fruited orange-trees,  
The murmur of that tideless sea,  
The odour of those thousand flow'rs  
*Alone*, had never lent to me  
This day-dream of delicious hours !  
Ah, *thou* wert there . . . ! Dear sunny clime  
In which we lived our happy day,  
No changes wrought by tide or time  
Can steal thy borrow'd charms away !  
For, turning back to Love and thee  
These dismal hours reflect again  
The radiance of that summer-sea  
And dull the anguish of my pain.  
Dear Land of Love ! I sometimes dream  
That I, *unlov'd*, am wand'ring there,  
And wonder if its groves would seem  
As fragrant, or its skies as fair—  
I wonder too, if this dim light  
This mock'ry of a summer sun,  
Might not appear to me more bright  
If shared by that belovèd one ?

---

I know not, but at eventide,  
After this faded sun has set,  
When thro' the window, open wide,  
I breathe the scented mignonette  
And all the flow'rs thou loved'st so well,  
The clematis and violet,  
And drooping yellow asphodel,  
Then mem'ry whispers to my heart  
Of all the joys denied to me,  
And wheresoever love, thou art  
I fain would go and dwell with thee !

“ Italia, Italia, o tu cui feo la sorte  
 Dono infelice di bellezza ; ond ’ hai  
 Funesta dote d’infiniti guai  
 Che in fronte scritti per grand doglia porte.”

VINCENZO FILICAIA.

“ . . . . . A land  
 Which was the mightiest in its old command  
 And is the loveliest, and must ever be  
 The master mould of Nature’s heavenly brand  
 Wherein were cast the heroic and the free,  
 The beautiful, the brave, the lords of earth and sea.”

BYRON.

## VII.

O H, Italy ! how dare I write of thee  
 When other bolder lips than mine have fail’d  
 To sing thy praise as I would have it sung ?—  
 Home of the myrtle and the violet—  
 Sky of serenest, clearest, bluest blue,  
 Earth of intensest, warmest fruitfulness—

Where life is *liv'd*, and ev'ry quicken'd sense  
Impatient, drinks in loveliness, and feasts  
On wonder after wonder !

Having bask'd

Beneath thy glorious, seldom-shrouded sun,  
And lov'd beneath thy scented orange boughs,  
Dear land of Art, of Beauty, and of Love,  
Now that my happy lips can proudly add  
The name of Freedom to thy list of charms,  
Fain would I, when my journey here is done  
Mix with thy sweet emancipated Earth !

Constance had sought this land which, like herself,  
Was bless'd (or cursed) by Heaven with the dow'r—  
'The fatal dow'r of Beauty,' but alas  
For her, altho' resembling Italy  
In being born to this fair heritage—  
E'en more unfortunate than that sweet land  
She groan'd in faster fetters ;—all in vain  
For *her* Italia's liberators rose,  
Mazzini, Garibaldi, and Cavour,  
Breaking a bondage less inveterate  
Than was her own ; weighing upon the heart  
The burden of a fatal servitude

Defies emancipation ;—thus she sigh'd  
A lovely slave in chains—(those chains that seem  
To some like brittle bands of summer flow'rs,  
As Love, descending airily on them  
With the soft 'lighting of a butterfly,  
Leaves no sad trace behind to mark the place  
Where his white wings have press'd, whilst on  
another

More keenly sensitive, he burns a scar  
Searing and withering unto the core  
The hapless heart that never more is whole.)  
How could she free herself from all the host  
Of newly waken'd torments? How subdue  
The multitude of restless enemies  
Besieging her, and harassing her soul?  
Love and Despair, and vascillating Hope,  
And Self-reproach, and Jealousy, and Doubt?  
How put to flight these fierce invading foes—  
These tyrants—these *Tedeschi* of the heart?

The town near which sad Constance made a home  
Was by the shores of that delightful sea  
Tideless, and often bluer than the sky  
Kissing its utmost edge ; towards the hills

Which bounded it to westward, gardens grew  
And olive-grounds, where nestling in the shade  
Of orange-groves, and dim with treliss'd ways  
O'errun with creepers, painted villas rose  
With cool low rooms, paved with their octagons  
Of shining crimson tiles, whilst on their walls  
The cunning artist had depicted scenes  
Repeating those the gay Venetian blinds  
Shut out from view—long line of sunny sea  
And orange-gardens, sombre cypress trees  
And sparkling fountains ; all the ceilings too  
Seem'd mimic vaults of heav'n, altho' the art  
Of mortal painter could not imitate  
The cloudless blue of the Italian sky.

In one of these my heroine dwelt alone  
An exile and a penitent : her home,  
The smallest of two villas which were call'd  
By the same name, stood in the garden grounds  
Of its more spacious neighbour. Those who know  
The wondrous beauties of that flow'r'y land  
Will see in fancy such a fairy place  
As was this southern garden ! Tow'rds the left  
(Looking to seaward) rose the boundary

Which shut this Eden from the outer world—  
A sunny wall of stucco, painted pink,  
Where, sporting in and out the frequent chinks  
Left by the clumsy scaffolding, she watch'd  
The playful pointed lizards in the sun.  
She often strove to catch them, but in vain ;  
Like many other far more precious things  
They glided thro' her fingers, or, at times  
Half blinded with the glory of the sun,  
She only grasp'd a shadow, scaring thus  
The fleet reality, which slid away  
Leaving her empty-handed.

Near this wall

Was built a shady summer-house or bow'r  
In which there was a window, garlanded  
With many-colour'd roses, clematis,  
And tendrils of the scarlet passion-flow'r.  
Oft sitting in this leafy balcony  
That over-look'd the narrow stone-paved way  
Which led down from the mountains to the town  
She mused for hours, fann'd by delicious air,  
And list'ning to the unaccustom'd sounds  
Wafted around her. Tinkling southern chimes,  
The ratt'ling hoofs of heavy-laden mules,

The cracking whips of sun-burnt muleteers  
Who goaded on with curses or with songs  
The patient creatures, smother'd with their bells  
And scarlet tassels. Seated carelessly  
Amongst their panniers, knitting as they rode,  
The black-eyed peasant-women laugh'd and joked  
And shouted to the men. Or, sadder sounds  
Would reach her, when the brown Franciscan friars  
Pass'd, bearing to their convent in the hills  
The silent dead. The painted effigies  
Upon the waving banners which they bore  
Reach'd almost to the window where she sat,—  
The twinkling candles, and the crucifix  
Uplifted high in air, to which there hung  
The ghastly figure of a naked Christ  
Surrounded by the horrid instruments  
Of human torture, sponge, and murd'rous spear  
And wreath of biting thorns—all these recall'd  
With painful vividness the agony  
Of God on earth ; anon, from time to time  
Long after the procession pass'd her by,  
Borne back upon the gentle southern breeze  
She heard again that dismal monotone.

The convent had been hidden in the shade  
Of sombre olive-trees, but that aloft  
Its pointed belfry, roof'd with colour'd tiles  
Betray'd the refuge of those holy men  
Who here had fled the turmoil of the world  
Vowing to bear perpetual poverty  
And live according to the godly rules  
Dictated by St. Francis. Or, again,  
When western breezes, with their balmy breath,  
Changed the dim branches to a shining sea  
Of glist'ning brightness, turning heavenwards  
The silver under lining of their leaves,  
Then Constance could behold betwixt the boughs  
The high enclosing walls, and thro' the gates  
Could catch a glimpse of tombstones gay with flow'rs  
And color'd crosses, many deck'd like shrines  
With off'rings of affection ; for 'twas there  
Towards the convent gates that Constance oft  
Would take her morning stroll, or, with her book  
'Twas there she sat beneath the olive-trees  
And watch'd the monks, clad in their russet gowns,  
Go forth in twos and threes, some bearing sacks  
And empty baskets, making for the town  
To beg or market. She would try to guess

What cause induced each individual  
To live this life, and wove strange histories  
Of blighted hopes, or unrequited love,  
Or sad bereavement, making of the world  
A place so desolate, that it were best  
To shut its mem'ries out with iron gates  
And massive walls ; but these were only dreams  
Of one who thought that all the world, like her,  
Had lov'd and suffer'd ;—this religious sect,  
Mostly recruited from a peasantry  
Sunk in the lowest depths of ignorance  
And superstition, scarcely boasted one  
Whose life would be more worthy to record  
Than that of a dumb animal which toils  
And helps to till the fertile earth, whose flow'rs  
It is too dull and weary to admire—  
For them no sentimental griefs of heart  
Or morbid longings for a solitude  
Remote from haunts of men ! those iron ills  
Of human life, disease and poverty,  
Had driven fishermen too old to fish,  
Or muleteers too lame to drive their mules,  
Into this forced seclusion, nothing loth  
They changed their well-worn homespun coats of blue

For the brown, heavy-looking, holy cloth  
Of the Franciscan order ;—ill they learnt  
And even worse pronounced their Latin pray'rs,  
These poor Italian peasants, but their dress,  
Their shaven tonsures, and their sandal'd feet  
Fill'd Constance with a sense of mystic awe—  
To her they seem'd the pious chosen few  
Who, for the love of Christ, had put away  
Those evil lusts and longings of the flesh  
So dear to man, and here in solitude  
And constant pray'r had buried evermore  
The recollections of their stormy lives.

Ah, all the storms they ponder'd on were those  
Braved on that beautiful capricious sea  
Which Constance lov'd ; of these they often talk'd  
With holy brethren—brethren once who shared  
Their ocean perils and their finny spoil.

Within the cloisters of the nunnery  
Which stood still further hidden in the hills,  
There may, perchance, have throb'd some heavy  
    hearts

Stricken by arrows with a sharper point,  
Inflicting pangs far more incurable  
Than those of hunger, thirst, or rheumatism,  
But yet the placid features of the nuns  
Seem'd to belie this pitying surmise,  
As Constance heard them, in their modest tones,  
Give her a smiling blessing as they pass'd.  
Of one of these, the sympathetic voice,  
And dreamy eyes, made Constance feel for her  
As for a friend. This sister show'd her o'er  
The convent garden, gave her flow'rs and fruit,  
And praised the while the peaceful pray'rful life  
Led by herself and all the sisterhood.

"To know," she said one day, as Constance paced  
With this new-found companion up and down  
The convent terrace (looking tow'rds the sea  
And distant hills) "That sin can only live  
"Outside the doors we close against the world—  
"To feel that after God has lent us Life  
"We give the gift He gave us back to Him—  
"Devoting to such noble servitude  
"The energies of body, mind, and soul—  
"What greater happiness than this on earth?

“ If, whilst our minds and our immortal souls  
“ Are fresh with all the warm enthusiasm  
“ Of our first years, what pious satisfaction  
“ If then for Him we mortify the flesh,  
“ And dedicate to Him each hidden thought,  
“ Each longing aspiration of the soul !  
“ And then the blessèd knowledge that our pray’rs  
“ May ease the punishments of purgatory,  
“ Earn’d and deserv’d by those departed souls  
“ Who sinn’d on earth, but which the gracious Lord,  
“ The blessèd son of Mary, condescends  
“ To mitigate and shorten ; ponder well  
“ And ask that God may make you realize  
“ The sacred pow’r of pray’r—the bitter sin  
“ Of cold neglect.”

“ Ah, these are thoughts indeed,”

Constance replied, “ Would lure my heart to pray,  
“ Could I but learn to credit such a creed !  
“ Most touching is the beautiful idea  
“ Of intercession for the helpless dead ;  
“ Ah, who would ever dare unclasp his hands  
“ Or rise from off his knees, could he but deem  
“ This sweet belief of your’s were only true !  
“ But we are taught a less poetic faith,

“ And this to us seems like a tender tale  
“ To tempt the knees to bend, and lift the hands  
“ Of those who would not truly pray for aught  
“ They could not measure, taste, or understand,  
“ Or else associate with sentiments  
“ Of earthly love and friendship, reaching on  
“ And thus continuing e’en after death.  
“ If what you think is true—is true indeed—  
“ I pray in time to bring my stubborn mind  
“ To know and feel its truth ; yet, if ’tis false,  
“ Tho’ sweet the thought of praying for the dead,  
“ I would not lean upon a fleeting shadow  
“ However fair ! What can our finite minds  
“ Know of the dim hereafter of the soul ?  
“ One man may dream his own belief the best,  
“ And force his obstinate idea of Heav’n  
“ Or Hell, upon the vacillating minds  
“ Of those who do not care to think themselves,  
“ And like to take religion ready-made—  
“ But ’tis the feeble sight of one poor worm  
“ Leading the others who are blinder still !  
“ For me, I *trust* ; I do not think I feel  
“ Like some, the need that any one should pluck  
“ The skirts of God for me—reminding Him

“ To pardon. Mercy is His attribute,  
“ And what seems good to Him, I know is good.  
“ I like to think He will be merciful,  
“ And that our too great self-abasement pains  
“ One who has made us for such noble things.  
“ He surely must have meant that we should work  
“ And seek ourselves the gifts we ask of Him—  
“ A troop of idle, cringing mendicants  
“ Must please Him less, tho’ crouching at His feet,  
“ Than the brave man who feels responsible—  
“ Who fights his way and wins, and lays his crown  
“ Of laurels at his heav’nly Father’s feet  
“ And gives him all the glory ?

“ All the hours

“ You and the Sisters pass in asking gifts  
“ Might surely bring you better things at last,  
“ Could you but go with praises in your hearts  
“ Out into life, and in the striving world  
“ Meet and subdue the Great Antagonist,  
“ Instead of fleeing from him ! You are good,  
“ And I, a sinner—so forgive these words  
“ From my unworthy lips ! I should rejoice  
“ To leave the weary world, and come to you  
“ And live in peace and pray’r amongst these hills

“And happy olive-grounds ; but that, to me  
“Who have so sinn’d and striven, this, the life  
“You lead, would seem too passive and inert  
“Tho’ ’tis a life free from the bitter sting  
“Of self-reproach ;—forgive me for my words.”

(There was a tinge in this, her argument  
Of Geoffrey Denzil’s subtler sophistry,  
A few short years ago she had not dared  
To speak thus boldly upon sacred things.)  
Her words were in Italian, but the Nun  
Answer’d her sadly in the English tongue—  
“Dear lady, I am English, let us speak  
“The language of the country I regret  
“And fain would see again before I die.  
“When two sad women, in a foreign land  
“Led by the sacred sympathy of grief  
“Thus seek companionship, and hope to find  
“Not only this, but maybe friendship too,  
“What need to deal in useless mysteries  
“Or make concealments?”

Constance smiled, and said,

“You must have wonder’d at my awkward words  
“Of bad Italian ! May I ask you why

“You left our native island? Do not heed  
“My idle questions should they give you pain.”

“Alas,” the Sister answer’d, “Soon is told  
“The reason of my choice; my life at home  
“In England, was unfortunate, I came  
“Hither to lose my sad identity;  
“I have succeeded, by the grace of God,  
“As a frail flow’r in this sweet southern garden  
“Which may have been a seedling from the north,  
“Expands into a glorious second life  
“Forgetful of its storm-toss’d origin,  
“So have I been re-born to taste those joys  
“I knew not of, the Spirit’s triumphing  
“Over the fallen flesh.”

Impatient tears

Here fell from Constance’s attentive eyes  
As in the Sister’s short biography  
She traced a sad resemblance to her own.  
The dew, so chilling after southern suns,  
Was falling now, and ev’ry leaf and blade  
Seem’d heavy with a sympathetic tear,  
And Constance, shivering, drew on her cloak,

Kissed the kind Sister on her sallow cheek,  
And sped towards her little twinkling home.

All night she could not sleep, tho' worn and tired  
She toss'd and turn'd, and ever and anon  
Came to her mind Sister Theresa's words,  
Which she repeated oft : " My life at home  
" In England was unfortunate ; I came  
" Hither to lose my sad identity—  
" I have succeeded." . . .

Then at last she thought,  
" I will give up the weary, wicked world,  
" And live this idle, happy, pray'rful life  
" Amongst the vines. Calm and self-satisfied,  
" I may be spared the pain of many tears,  
" And helpless, hopeless, longings to forget—  
" Oh God, that it were possible to lose  
" One hated, blessed, haunting memory !"

Her head was aching, and she seem'd to hear  
The jingling southern chimes, now faint and low,  
Now clanging with a harsh and angry tone,  
And hammering a fierce discordant knell  
Into her fever'd brain. The empty room

Seem'd full of chatt'ring strangers, pressing on  
Into her presence ; thro' the bolted doors  
They seem'd to crowd and elbow one another—  
She did not fear them, but she wonder'd why  
The world had grown so small—so populous,  
So noisy, and so sadly wearisome !—  
She wonder'd at a thousand other things  
Which had not seem'd so wonderful before . . .  
Compared this thing with that, and multiplied,  
Subtracted—added—till her mind became  
A prison-house of figures, struggling all  
To make some given number. Then the twos  
And threes and fours all suddenly became  
Huge human forms ; amazed and terrified,  
She call'd for help against these horrid shapes,  
And when the frighten'd servants heard her cries  
They hasten'd to her, finding her alone  
But raving in a fever ; all her mind  
Distorted, wand'ring and delirious,—  
The secrets of her inmost soul let loose,  
She call'd to Geoffrey, with a piteous cry,—  
“ Come back to me ! deserted and alone  
“ I wander thro' the world and look for you !  
“ So desolate—so lonely—and so cold ! ”

(And here she shudder'd), then she rambled on  
Of Roland and Sir John.

The doctor came,  
And bled her, as Italian doctors bleed  
Whenever they can find a fit, excuse  
To use their lancets. Then her auburn hair  
He roughly cut with scissors, lest its weight  
Should add towards the fever in her brain.

'Twas thus she lay for many weary days  
Peop'ling an almost perfect solitude  
With phantoms from the unforgotten past,  
And seeming oftentimes to see in dreams  
Her absent lover, with his earnest eyes  
Gazing at her with anxious, loving looks,  
And reading all the secrets of her soul.

When in our lives some evil change  
    Fills our sad eyes with transient tears,  
If not from piety, we turn  
From habit, to those stars that burn  
    With quiet sympathetic light  
    Up in the blue ethereal spheres—  
Those far star-lands, where comets range  
    From time to time, and whence the sight  
Uplifted, seems to meet the eyes  
Of God, assuming planet guise,  
Tho' heav'n-abiding, earthward bent  
    Towards our heavy eyes that weep :  
    Ah, little stars, your vigils keep  
High in the distant firmament !  
    Visible witnesses to prove  
    That 'tis not only Death and Love  
    Which mortals may not comprehend,  
    For what you are, and whither tend  
Your constellations, clustering  
    And clinging to the vault of heav'n  
We know not, sadly wondering  
    All veil'd and blinded as we are,  
    Thoughtlessly worshipping that star  
    Maybe the omen of our end !  
    How dare we, till the clouds are riven  
Shrouding our dull intelligence  
    Hope for encouragement from thence,  
When e'en we know not what is best  
    For our own welfare day by day,  
Obeying blindly the behest  
    Of hearts as changing as the waves,  
Fickle and ignorant as they—

Mere puppets in some mighty hand  
Luring us on to shoal or strand,  
Or to mysterious ocean-caves,  
Where our dead hearts may be the food  
Of cruel syrens of the flood.  
In vain I lift my tearful eyes  
Towards th' impenetrable skies,  
The careless stars vouchsafe no light  
To show which path is wrong or right,  
Without a hope, without a guide,  
I seem a straw upon the tide  
Of Life's inevitable stream ;  
All helpless to resist the flow  
Of such a cataract, I seem  
Without a will—would I could know  
If it were best to trust my boat  
Upon this mystic wave and float  
Towards the ocean-gates, and be  
Borne to the unfathomable sea ?

“Quan presto se va el placer,  
 Como despues de acordado  
 Da dolor ;  
 Como, al nuestro parecer,  
 Qualquiera tiempo pasado  
 Fué mejor.”

SPANISH SONG.

“Comme on n'est jamais en liberté d'aimer ou de cesser  
 d'aimer, l'amant ne peut se plaindre avec justice de l'incon-  
 stance de sa maîtresse, ni elle de la légèreté de son amant.”

LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

## VIII.

AFTER long days of fever and of pain  
 There comes a lull, which almost mimics death,  
 When the weak frame, which a false energy  
 Has fired with transient force, revives to find  
 The languid level of that listless life  
 Which surely follows on the fever's track.

Then one by one upon the wak'ning sight  
Dawn the familiar objects ; gradually  
The doubtful, semi-dormant mind renews  
Its old impressions, by the contrast made  
Terribly sharp, expressive and distinct.

To Constance came this slow awakening  
As from the past experience of a soul  
Toss'd into port from some mysterious sea,  
Quick-sanded, and of dangerous ebb and flow—  
She look'd around, and saw the well-known room,  
Her little bed within its arch'd alcove—  
The painted chimney-board, and on a chair  
She saw a pray'r book and a rosary  
And the blue over-garment of a Nun—  
A plate of oranges, some fresh cut flow'rs—  
A heap of needle-work she noticed next—  
And then the tall geranium-tree that climb'd  
Up half the house, look'd thro' the window-pane  
And nodded its red head, and seem'd to say  
“ Good morning ! welcome back again to Life  
And sunshine ! ”

Thro' the folding-doors ajar,  
Which led into the little sitting-room,

She saw a bending form, and recognised  
Sister Theresa's pallid pensive face—  
Beside the open window at her work  
She sat, her busy needle up and down  
Plied without ceasing, whilst a moted beam  
Of golden sunshine falling on her head,  
Liken'd her to those pale prä-Raphaelite  
Pictures of suff'ring saints, which seem to waft  
A faint, sad, odour of asceticism  
Down to these striving, money-making days  
In which we live. Then, when her wand'ring eyes  
Had seen the sister, with a gentle sigh  
As of contentment, Constance turn'd aside  
And fell into a quiet dreamless sleep.

Dreamless—yet often did she seem to feel  
The vague and half-acknowledged influence  
Of fond eyes looking at her whilst she slept,  
Shedding on her their kind caressing beams.  
And now and then, she saw upon the wall  
The shadow of the Sister as she work'd,  
Or leaning o'er her, list'ning if she breathed  
Calmly and quietly, and once she thought  
She heard some whisper'd words in that dear voice

She dared not ever hope to hear again  
Save in such waking dreams.

Thus, half asleep

She floated on the quiet sun-lit hours  
Back into life. The Sister rais'd her head  
With propping pillows, read to her, and talk'd,  
And told her stories of Italian life :  
As thus the Nun was tending her one day  
She fell asleep, and waking up refresh'd  
As with returning strength, she softly rose,  
Half dress'd herself, and looking in the glass  
Miss'd her long auburn hair, and met a face  
Looking like that of some sweet southern boy  
With tender dreamy eyes, and curling hair  
Cut closely round the little classic head.

She thought Theresa would be glad to see  
How strong she was, and how her tender care  
Had nurs'd her back to life. An exile here  
She lifted up her grateful heart to God  
Who thus had will'd that she should find a friend,  
For in her desolation she had thought  
That all the world abhorred and hated her.  
Ah, when we deem we are deserted thus

What double tenderness and gratitude  
We feel for those who even by mistake  
Have thrown to us some little random word,  
Some crumb of comfort ! How the ready tears  
Which would not rise to plead nor to resent,  
Will flood our eyes when some kind stranger thus  
Has heart to pity all the wounds of ours !  
Much more did Constance feel indebted now  
To this devoted woman, who had thus  
Nursed her from Christian charity and love ;—  
She gently push'd the folding doors aside  
And thinking but to see that placid face  
She look'd into the sun-lit sitting-room.

She look'd, and all her re-awaken'd being  
Flung to the winds its languid apathy,  
Whilst all the blood in her impassive veins  
Hasten'd tumultuously once more to warm  
Her faded cheeks ; for, looking out to sea  
And seeming dark against its blue expanse  
Framed by the flower-cover'd window-sill,  
Sat Geoffrey Denzil, leaning on his hand  
As plunged in thought.

With wild impatient eyes

She gazed on him who seem'd the 'live response  
To those uncertain visions, which the night  
Of Nature and of Reason had reveal'd  
To her unquiet mind. Yes, there alone  
He waited silently : she thought his face  
Look'd older and more haggard than of yore,  
Its features somewhat harder, and the lines  
Which time or care had traced upon his brow  
Seem'd written now in plainer characters.  
As Constance look'd, she noted ev'ry turn  
Of form and feature ; Denzil's proud sad face  
(The face she knew, and lov'd, alas, so well !)  
Turn'd half aside, away from where she stood,  
Showing the outline of his haughty brow,  
His sunburnt cheek, and little pointed beard,  
Resembled much that portrait of Van Dyke  
Which the great master painted of himself,  
Or even more those gallant cavaliers  
Whose pictures deck'd the walls of Denzil Place.

Constance, with all a woman's instinct, guess'd  
That this was not the first and only time  
That Geoffrey Denzil, looking at the sea,  
Had watched and waited near her all the day,

Hoping for happy tidings ev'ry morn  
And sadly leaving, when the ev'ning light  
Flush'd all the changeful Mediterranean,  
The house where hover'd on the brink of death  
The woman whom he lov'd :

She truly guess'd ;

The peasants beating with their staves and canes  
The purple berries from the olive-boughs,  
Had often paus'd and watch'd with curious eyes  
The figure of the tall young Englishman,  
Who hasten'd ev'ry morning from the town  
Towards the painted Villa Belvedere.  
Arrested by no obstacle, he strode  
O'er outspread olive-sheets, and often left  
His footprints in the drying golden grains  
Of Indian corn. Or, Briton-like, he leapt  
Each rugged wall or pointed aloë-hedge  
Which separated garden-grounds or groves  
Of olive and of orange.

Well they knew

That either love, or some absorbing grief  
Impell'd him thus, and for his handsome face  
And careworn look, they smilingly forgave  
His indiscriminating disregard

Of property or landmark. Ah, those days  
Were days indeed of bitterness to him !  
'Twas little wonder if his anxious face  
Bore trace of all his spirit underwent  
During this cruel time ! Amongst his hair  
(Had Constance follow'd blindly the advice  
Of her impetuous heart, and with her arms  
Encircled that dear head,) she would have seen  
How many subtle little silver threads  
Were coiled and intermingled with the brown,  
For love of her !

*"For her !"* Ah, reader, thou

Who with thy chaste and disapproving eye  
May'st deign to read this simple history,  
"Wise as a serpent, harmless as a dove,"  
Let not the voice of thine immaculate heart  
Go forth to judge my hapless heroine  
Who was not fashion'd of that sterner stuff,  
Fit to pursue the undeviating path  
Of perfect wisdom ! Surely to resist  
With such an impulse tearing at her heart  
Must prove at least she was not always weak ;  
So, pretty prude, read on, nor skip the page  
Whereon no tale of amorous interview

Will cause thy gentle cheek to wear a blush,  
For Constance, almost fearful as thyself,  
Found strength to close the double folding-doors  
As a defence against her guilty heart  
And Geoffrey Denzil.

As he quickly turn'd

He only saw a flutt'ring muslin fold  
Which somehow seem'd entangled in the door,  
And then a wan white hesitating hand  
Withdrew what might have been a flag of truce  
To the reluctant warfare he had waged  
For many weary days against his heart.

Thus Constance could be strong, and cruel too—  
So Denzil thought, as fearing to pursue  
The trembling fugitive who thus in haste  
Regain'd the precincts of the sanctuary,  
He made one stride towards the closing door  
And there remain'd discomfited and sad  
With disappointment.

. . . . .

When the Sister came

She found poor Constance with a flutt'ring heart  
And tearful eyes. "When did he come?" she ask'd,

" Ah, what avails to try and do the right  
" And flee away from evil ! For to me  
" The earth contains not two more terrible things  
" Than, or to see him or to see him not !  
" Oh, tell me ! did he come and seek me here  
" Or did you guess my heart and send for him ?  
" He is the very dearest thing to me  
" In all the world, and yet we are not wed !  
" He liv'd quite near us in our country home—  
" We used to wander in the summer woods  
" And walk together thro' the rustling leaves  
" Of Autumn ; in the dismal winter days  
" I long'd for light and warmth, and turn'd to him  
" And seem'd to find them both ;—he made the Spring  
" Seem greener, fresher, and more full of hope—  
" With him, each thing in nature grew to be  
" More beautiful, and guessing not the cause,  
" I let the days go by as in a dream—  
" My husband was the kindest of old men—  
" He trusted me too well, and then at last  
" One day I found myself a guilty thing  
" And so it happen'd." . . . .

Then Theresa sigh'd

And said that often in the wicked world

Like tragedies occurred. "You are so help'd  
" By ev'rything around you, to incline  
" To Folly and to Sin ; e'en you yourself  
" Half charge the fields and flowers with your fault  
" And hold the forest trees responsible,—  
" But what of laughter, song, and merriment,  
" The blaze of lights,—and music and the dance—  
" The dress invented but to charm the eye?"  
" It may be often thus," Constance replied,  
" But not with us, dear Sister ; true we lov'd—  
" But our's no mushroom-fancy in one night  
" Forced into life ; nor was our's sudden love  
" Dancing to pleasant sound of pandean pipes  
" And dying with the music ;—when I die  
" And not till then, will die in me this beam  
" Off-shot from heav'n—this music of the spheres !  
" Nay—I, alas, can plead no such excuse,  
" For in almost as pure an atmosphere  
" As that wherein you say your daily pray'rs,  
" And summon'd by no more seductive strain  
" Than the clear tolling of your convent bell,  
" Sprang into life my fatal love for him.  
" You are so good—you cannot understand—

" Ah, Sister, Love—than all the seven sins,  
" Is surely far more difficult to quell !"

Theresa answer'd that she was not good  
But a mere erring woman like herself—  
Who had at last been led into the fold  
Of the Good Shepherd.

" Women deem they love,"  
She added, " But their love is writ on sand,  
" To fade before the first encroaching wave  
" Which sweeps away the letters, and the place  
" Once fair and smooth again, they trace straightway  
" Another name, which still another wave  
" Will kiss to death."

" Ah, cruel metaphor !"  
Sigh'd Constance with a shudder. " Waves may come  
" And men may come and go with changing forms,  
" But in the world, to all eternity  
" There lives one man—one only name to me !"

" Ah, '*souvent femme varie*,'" replied the Nun,  
" But in this happy household where I dwell,  
" (Where *you* may dwell if God vouchsafes you grace,)  
" We serve one Master only, and admit

“ Of no allegiance which is split in two—  
“ (You know the text—and how we may not serve  
“ Both God and Mammon.) What is earthly love?  
“ How can a passing passion take the guise  
“ And ape the majesty of higher things?  
“ We men and women are but floating straws  
“ On the inevitable stream of Destiny—  
“ We love not whom we would, and oft the heart  
“ Resists its fetters, but of what avail?  
“ Some secret current, such as will impel  
“ Two of these said poor straws to cling together,  
“ (United by the circlet of a bubble  
“ Which breaks and frees them lower down the stream)  
“ Inclines our human hearts to him or her,  
“ Or all as surely breaks the brittle bands  
“ Binding our fickle natures ! Ere I sought  
“ This happy solitude, I knew the world,  
“ I heard Love spoken of, and did not shun  
“ The mention of his name; but I have liv'd  
“ And learnt, and I am older far than you,  
“ Ah, Love is bitterness ! I had a friend . . . .  
“ One I knew well when I was of the world—  
“ And could I prove to you by her sad fate  
“ The little worth of all our human loves—

"The heart's unparalleled inconstancy—

"I would relate to you her history."

"I wait to hear it," Constance sadly said,

"And wish, indeed, you could invent some tale

"To teach me fickleness!"

Then said the Nun—

"A lady lov'd, and oftentimes she sigh'd

"To one who courted her on English soil,

"Alas, maybe I could have lov'd you once—

"But now too late! too late! it cannot be!

"My heart is far away in Hindostan

"Where braving for my sake the double ills

"Of heat and cold (the cold is at his heart

"For loss of me!) my lover toils to gain

"The gold with which to win me from the hands

"Of sordid parents,' as she spoke one day,

"Open'd the door, and with a startled cry

"She fell upon the Anglo-Indian's breast

"Before that other man who lov'd her well—

"Then all her friends rejoiced, and she was wed,

"And he who lov'd her fled across the seas

"Unknown to her, in grief and bitterness;

"And she, too hurried almost, to reflect,

"Prepared to journey to that distant land

“ To which her husband ow'd his growing wealth.  
“ Then all went well at first—amused she watch'd  
“ The curious elements of Indian life—  
“ And whilst she moved and journey'd all went well  
“ For at her heart there was an aching pain  
“ She sought to kill by constant restlessness  
“ And change of scene—and so the days went by ;  
“ But when she came to Trichinopoly  
“ (One short day's journey from her future home,)  
“ She said to him (her husband,) ‘ Leave me here,  
“ ‘ My sad, sad heart is broken—let me die—  
“ ‘ I lov'd the man I would not own I lov'd—  
“ ‘ You were so long away—I pray'd for you—  
“ ‘ I said so often that I lov'd you well  
“ ‘ I ended by believing what I said—  
“ ‘ Oh, curse me ! put me from you ! let me go !  
“ ‘ I cannot lie at night so near your heart  
“ ‘ When I am dreaming of that other man !’  
“ Her husband heard her—he was stern and cold,  
“ An Indian judge, (tho' in his secret heart  
“ Methinks he was in favour of Suttee,  
“ So firmly did he deem the marriage-tie  
“ Bound women to their lords in life and death !)  
“ He did as she desired—for, cursing her,

"He put her from him, and he let her go  
"Back to the land where last she saw the man  
"She really lov'd. Prepared to weather storms  
"And bear for him disgrace and poverty—  
"Prepared for him to live a life of sin  
"So she might see his face and make it glad—  
"She thus return'd ; but with her reach'd the shore  
"The tidings of an English victory,  
"And then she heard how on Crimean heights  
"This man she lov'd, and came to seek, had fall'n  
"Fighting at Alma. Naught to her remain'd,  
"The heart within her bosom seem'd to die—  
"She forthwith said good-bye to all the world  
"And took the vows of a poor Sisterhood  
"As I have done."

The tears were in her eyes  
And Constance turn'd away to hide her own,  
"So now she is a Nun," she said, "like you—  
"I pity her—and almost understand  
"Her history—yet fear this heart of mine  
"Is floating on a less uncertain sea—  
"I dread that I shall love him till I die."

I said "Ah, give me this ! I shall not care

"What after-storms may beat, come blast and hail—

"Come all the ills that make the rest despair

I shall not care !"

I said "There is no good that can compare

"With this, that makes all other blessings pale,

"And if I lose e'en Heav'n, yet gain my pray'r

I shall not care !"



" With thee conversing I forget all time ;  
 " All seasons, and their change, all please alike.  
 " Sweet is the breath of Morn, her rising sweet,  
 " With charm of earliest birds ; pleasant the Sun,  
 " When first on this delightful land he spreads  
 " His orient beams on herb, tree, fruit, and flower,  
 " Glistening with dew ; fragrant the fertile Earth  
 " After soft showers ; and sweet the coming on  
 " Of grateful Evening mild ; then silent Night  
 " With this her solemn bird, and this fair Moon,  
 " And these the gems of Heaven, her starry train ;  
 " But neither breath of Morn, when she ascends  
 " With charm of earliest birds ; nor rising Sun  
 " On this delightful land ; nor herb, fruit, flower,  
 " Glistening with dew ; nor fragrance after showers ;  
 " Nor grateful Evening mild ; nor silent Night,  
 " With this her solemn bird, nor walk by Moon,  
 " Or glittering starlight, without thee, is sweet."

MILTON.

## IX.

C ONSTANCE had listen'd with attentive ear  
 To this almost convincing argument  
 Proving a woman's instability  
 Of heart and purpose ; but tho' pitying  
 Sister Theresa and the Indian Judge,  
 She would not own that the inconstancy

Of one weak woman, taught her firmer heart  
To feel less fond or less unfortunate.  
And then she thought, maybe, her kindly nurse  
Had only introduced this anecdote  
To change the dangerous current of her thoughts  
Centred on Denzil.

“ But you did not say ”

She pleadingly resumed, “ how to this place  
“ So far away, so hidden from the world,  
“ He turn’d his footsteps, and thus found me out ? ”  
Theresa told her then, in simple words,  
The history of the strange coincidence  
Of her first meeting Denzil ; it was thus :

“ When first you had the fever,” she began,  
“ (I knew it but by chance, when passing here  
“ To beg your contribution for the poor  
“ Your servants told me you were ill in bed ;)  
“ I sought your side, and found your English maid  
“ Almost distracted with anxiety—  
“ Not understanding what the doctor said,  
“ And powerless to indicate her fears  
“ Or your requirements ; so, she sat and wept,  
“ Whilst you were uttering wild delirious words.

“ At first they all seem’d meaningless to me,  
“ But by and bye, a passionate appeal  
“ To some one it was evident you lov’d  
“ Named ‘ Geoffrey ’ warn’d me that you might commit  
“ Some indiscretion of speech, and lest your maid  
“ Should hear your words, I sent her from the room,  
“ My pretext, that a fever such as your’s  
“ She too might sicken with, and be to you  
“ A mere incumbrance, rather than a help.  
“ ’Twas thus I came to be alone with you,  
“ And then it was that all your random words  
“ Of self-reproach, and those impassion’d names  
“ You call’d your absent lover, touch’d my heart  
“ And told me half the truth ; and now I fear’d  
“ To summon to your side your lawful lord  
“ Lest I should bring some dark avenging shape  
“ To what I guess’d might be your hiding-place.”  
(Here Constance could not help a furtive smile  
At the idea these passing words call’d up  
Of good Sir John, with rosy wrinkled face,  
In Hessian boots and gold-rimm’d spectacles,  
Who did not seem to answer to the name  
Of ‘ dark avenging shape.’)

The Nun went on—

“ But when I ask’d your maid, I heard from her  
“ That he you raved of was your husband’s friend,  
“ Seeming almost his son,—so well-belov’d,  
“ By all your household honour’d and revered,  
“ And ‘Would that he were here!’ the girl exclaim’d.  
“ So, thinking it were sad to die alone  
“ (For then I trembled lest you might not live,)  
“ I wrote a letter to that absent one  
“ Of whom you raved ; I did not need to ask  
“ What name he bore, since o’er and o’er again  
“ You moan’d it in the watches of the night,  
“ Beseeching you might see him once again—  
“ I soon discover’d also where he dwelt,  
“ And praying God would pardon me the sin  
“ Of bringing thus two erring human beings  
“ Together, that one parting soul might speed  
“ Peaceful and satisfied, (if both indeed  
“ Had lov’d and err’d) I hasten’d to the town  
“ Bearing my letter thither, and therein  
“ I told of how you lay upon the brink  
“ Of Death and darkness, and of how your lips  
“ Had oftentimes repeated o’er his name—  
“ And how I heard he was your husband’s friend,  
“ Of whom I only knew he was not here—

“ And you were lonely ;—that from this I fear’d  
“ You might be shadow’d by some passing cloud  
“ Of his displeasure—then I said to him  
“ That *he* would know, and he would surely write  
“ And solve what seem’d the myst’ry of your life,  
“ And tell me how to act ; then full of doubts  
“ I sign’d and seal’d it.

“ When I reach’d the post  
“ I gave my letter that it might *be* weigh’d,  
“ And as that lazy old Antonio,  
“ (The bent, grey-bearded man—the man you know,)  
“ Turn’d o’er the letter in his dirty hand,  
“ He, spelling the direction, told me how  
“ An Englishman had been that very day  
“ Asking for letters to that self-same name—  
“ I marvell’d much at such a strange event,  
“ And learning where he sojourn’d, sought him out,  
“ And it was truly he to whom I wrote,  
“ His name was Geoffrey Denzil.”

“ Say again,”

Cried Constance, wildly starting up in bed,  
“ What was his name ? Repeat it once again,  
“ I love to hear it from another’s lips  
“ The while I try to make myself believe

" I hear it for the first and only time—  
 " And try to wonder how its sound would seem  
 " Were it once more indifferent to me  
 " As when I had not known him ! but alas,  
 " This is a kind of silly childish game  
 " I play at, trying to deceive my heart—  
 " In vain, in vain ! I cannot now recall  
 " Even these few impressions of a Past  
 " In which he was not ! Tell me what he said  
 " When first he knew I was so near to him,  
 " And ill, and asking for him day and night ?"

" Ah," said Theresa, " you were ill indeed  
 " And near to death, or else you would have felt  
 " His wild despairing kisses on your brow,  
 " Your lips, your hair, your hands——"

" What ! was he here,  
 " Here in this very room ?" poor Constance cried  
 Shock'd and bewilder'd, and yet glad at heart—  
 " Yes, he seem'd mad, he would not be denied,  
 " And I was weak—and you were so, so ill !  
 " Ah, how he loves you !" . . . . .

Constance seem'd to feel  
 A sudden rush of happiness and health,

“ To-morrow I shall rise and dress,” she said,  
“ And feel as strong as felt my former self,  
“ And you will let him find me sitting there  
“ Beside the window. I will see him once,  
“ And thank him for his love, and say ‘ good-bye. ’ ”  
“ Then you are strong indeed,” the Sister said,  
“ If half the world had strength for such ‘ good-byes ’  
“ How far more blest the other half had been !  
“ How many had been happier, or unborn ! ”

. . . . .

Good-bye, good-bye ! ah, easy little word  
When two fond, foolish, lovers, say it o’er,  
And make it but the plausible excuse  
To meet once more to say it once again !  
Ah, sweet indeed those make-believe farewells,  
With that dear head on our too happy breast,  
And those sweet eyes the brighter for their tears,  
And that fond, flutt’ring, heart, that starts and throbs,  
But will not break at any rate to-night !  
Good-bye, good-bye ! and once again good-bye !

But there are *real* farewells, when haggard-eyed  
We stare all tearless, and with silent lips,  
At one who once has made our life a dream

Of happiness, well knowing we must wake  
And live thro' bitter morrows ! These are times  
When to our own deceitful selves we say  
" This is *real sorrow*, all that came before  
" Was but a mere delusive mockery,  
" Only assumed to make another sad,  
" Or acted, as an actor plays a part  
" For self-advancement ;—this is pain at heart,  
" This—this is desolation !"

Even thus

Constance and Geoffrey felt that they could face  
And bear those false farewells of ev'ry day,  
Whilst yet they fear'd to say that fatal word  
Which almost seem'd another name for death.

She had indeed, in agitated tones,  
(With many timid glances at the door,  
As tho' she fear'd the eye of Miss L'Estrange,)  
Implor'd of Geoffrey Denzil to depart—  
And she had held his hand, and said ' goodbye '  
And sad ' God-bless-yous,' and her eyes were wet,  
Yet Denzil did not leave her, for he said  
(Making his conscience readily his dupe,  
And almost in a voice of indignation,)

“ How can I leave you in a foreign land,  
“ Deserted, ill, and suff’ring, and for me  
“ Bearing humiliation and disgrace ?  
“ The common laws of cold civility—  
“ Humanity,—the merest loosest bond  
“ Of careless passing friendship, would demand  
“ That having met you here, by accident,  
“ I stay at least till you are strong and well.”  
And Constance, loving, temporising, weak,  
Had felt a burden lifted from her heart,  
And echo’d softly Geoffrey Denzil’s words,  
“ When I am well . . . .” and thus it was he stay’d.

How had they met ? Was Constance cold and stern,  
And Geoffrey like the Spartan youth of old  
Who nursed without complaint his gnawing fox ?  
I do not know exactly how they met—  
Perchance as mortals made of moulded ice,  
Without emotion, or as you or I  
Had met again, after suspense and doubt  
Our own true love, on an Italian eve,  
Alone, save for a little crescent moon  
No thicker than an eye-lash, or a “ C ”—  
(A waning moon, for when she first appears

She forms a sulky "C" that turns its back  
And will not be a letter, come what may,  
Whilst Denzil on this happy ev'ning saw  
On looking up, for very joy, to heav'n,  
*Her* dear initial shining in the sky  
Seeming to bid him hope!) . . . . .

Some weeks from then

They sat together 'neath the spreading shade  
Of a thick twisted chesnut tree, with stem  
Of giant girth; amongst the herbage green  
Were feeding parti-colour'd sheep and goats,  
And here and there were scatter'd moss-grown rocks,  
Fall'n from the shadowing mountain years ago,  
Seeming like lesser mountains, lately born,  
Uplifting pigmy peak and spur, that rose  
Piercing the velvet breast of Mother Earth.  
Here, far beyond the convent in the hills,  
The landscape wore a less Italian look,  
The ground was grassy as an English lawn,  
And the light-colour'd green of chesnut leaves  
Replaced the sombre olive. From the hills  
Two mountain torrents, free'd from Winter's thrall,  
Which erst had turn'd them into silent snow,

As tho' rejoicing in their liberty,  
Rush'd headlong to the sea, and meeting here  
Mingled their waters, and triumphantly  
With noise, henceforth proclaim'd themselves a stream  
Of some importance, bearing as they did  
On their united tides the fallen trunks  
Which, higher up, the busy wood-cutters  
Sent without further trouble to the town  
For sale and export. With a thund'rous noise  
These floating corpses of departed trees  
Hurl'd down each shelving wat'ry precipice,  
Met the huge rocks which form'd the landing-place  
To some such other stair ; there paused a space,  
And then, envelop'd in a cloud of spray  
Once more awoke the echoes.

Hitherto

Constance had fear'd to seek this spot alone,  
Or even with the gay Italian girl  
Who led her mule ; for kind old Angela  
(Her gard'ner's wife,) had shown to her one day  
The shaggy skin of a devouring wolf  
Shot in this very place some years ago  
By a brave son of her's who since had died,  
And Constance was a coward, dreading beasts

And birds of prey, and monsters of the deep,  
Far more than moral dangers, which no sword  
Or mortal's gun, however ably aim'd  
Can stab or kill ; but God who made the heart  
Implants in each its different form of fear,  
And oftentimes we shun the lesser harm  
Yet coax some cunning danger to our breast  
Which, serpent-like, will sting our trusting heart  
Or foolish feeding hand ;—but now she felt  
No fear of mountain wolf or forest snake,  
Since *he* was near who was so brave and strong,  
For something in his presence there convey'd  
To her a sense of safety from all ill.

Constance was working, and she did not speak,  
And Geoffrey, stretch'd full length upon the grass,  
Had just been reading, now he paused, and propped  
His small uplifted head upon his hand,  
And Constance felt his eloquent grey eyes  
Fix'd on her own, which droop'd upon her work.  
He spoke at length, but did not speak of love,  
For it is possible to love, and lie  
Upon the sward at the Belovèd's feet,  
And yet give utterance but to careless talk

Of bird, or tree or flow'r, or even things  
Seemingly more removed than these from love.  
Thus Denzil spoke, for by a mutual bond  
These two had bound themselves that whilst they stay'd  
Together in the South, (he at the town,  
And she amongst the olives,) they would shun  
That fatal subject, and that they would be  
Dear and united friends and nothing more.  
They watch'd each other keenly, fearing lest  
One or the other should o'erpass the bounds,  
And proving himself (or *herself*) too weak, .  
Should break the compact,—slave to mem'ries past  
Or to some dream of futures false and fair.

But they had hitherto been true and stern—  
True to their stern resolve ; it may have been  
Because they felt that ev'ry little word  
Was brimming over with that subtle sense  
Apparent in their very breath, which tried  
To breathe of lawful things, and thus that theme,  
Unutter'd, and yet always understood,  
They did not need to christen by its name,  
But as a fav'rite child is often call'd  
By one far less harmonious than its own,

From sheer excess of fondness, so they shunn'd

Shame-faced and shy, the tell-tale name of "Love"  
Knowing they lov'd too well ! 'Twas thus each word  
Seem'd but an ugly nickname for the one  
They dared not utter. But each understood.  
So when she said

" Hark to that thund'ring sound !

" Is it a coming storm or floating tree  
" Striking against the rocks ? " then unto him  
Her words would seem to say—

" Ah, I was frail !

" I drifted with the tide—the headlong stream  
" Wreck'd me against a rock, yet I rejoice  
" To wreck upon a rock I love so well—  
" Alas, I love you—love you ! pity me  
" And love me as I love ! " And when he said  
Some trivial words like these

" Ah, do not fear,

" No coming storm is clouding o'er the sky,  
" 'Tis but the floating timber which the stream  
" Is bearing to the sea," it seem'd to her  
As tho' he said—

" Ah, darling, do not fear !

" For I am strong as yonder rapid stream,

“ And I will bear you safely to the sea  
“ Whither all journey ; put your trust in me  
“ And love me as I love.”

But ere they reach'd  
This seeming state of perfect self-control,  
There were so many problems to explain,  
So that from time to time they were constrain'd  
To dwell upon the Past. How Geoffrey came  
To be alone at Denzil Place that night ?  
Why Constance, too, was waking at that hour ?  
The fragments of the letter she had found  
In Denzil's writing ? First, why Geoffrey came.

He told her how a distant relative  
Had died, and he was summon'd to return  
To England, which he had but lately left ;  
How, on arriving there, he found some chance,  
(Some wish to spite the kinsman who till then  
Had hoped to be his heir,) had made him leave  
To Geoffrey Denzil half his property—  
How he, too sad to be rejoiced at this,  
(Since now he had surprised his fatal love,  
And made a vow that he would never harm  
But keep as pure as is the driven snow

The mem'ry of his idol)—had resolved  
That, as he needs must visit Denzil Place,  
To take some papers from an iron safe,  
Relating to his new inheritance,  
He would not do so till the silent night—  
So, saying as a pretext, at the inn,  
That he desired they would not tell Sir John  
Of his arrival, lest the good old man  
Should deem he trespass'd, staying at the Hall  
When Denzil was in England ; he arranged  
To ride there when the household were in bed,  
Awaited only by his ancient nurse,  
Who, telling him the house was plunged in sleep,  
Had led him to the silent library  
And left him to his search ; the rest we know.

His letter was a lover's rhapsody,  
To be deliver'd if his love surviv'd  
Her husband and himself ; for in his heart  
Had lurk'd a wish that she might some day know  
How he had lov'd her once. Therein he told  
The guilty reason of his sudden flight,  
And after telling how he strove in vain  
To school his wayward heart, he wrote these words,

Which Constance partly read at Denzil Place—

“ That you should be another’s—you who seem

“ Created to be mine in ev’ry sense

“ In which a woman may belong to man—

“ Whom, after all these waiting years, I meet

“ At last ; it almost seems too hard to bear,

“ But so it is, and I must go from hence !”

Then Geoffrey spoke of strange affinities,

And how a woman, meeting such a man,

Reads on his brow that he is lord of her—

The lover of her life ; and how a man

Who meets a certain maid (or e’en, alas !

A certain matron,) murmurs to himself

“ This is the woman who was made for me

“ To love and cherish !”

He reminded her

What dress she wore the first time they had met ;

And Constance, with a flutter at her heart,

Remark’d how ev’ry detail was described,

Omitting nothing. “ It was all of white,

The day was warm and sunny, and you stood

Framed for awhile inside the open door,

And looking like an angel—in your hand

You held your gloves and shady garden-hat—  
 Your hair was knotted with a color'd snood  
 To suit the floating coral-color'd sash  
 That bound you, like a baby, round the waist,  
 And then you spoke—! You seem'd so young and fair

That I, who then had neither care nor creed,  
 Adopted you at once as patron saint,  
 And afterwards—you know—”

Then Constance sigh'd,

“ With *me*, I think it must have been the Fire

“ And seeing you so very near to death.”

“ The Fire with *you*,” said Denzil, “ but with *me*

“ Not only fire, but ev'ry element—

“ Earth, Air, and Fire, and Water, all combined

“ To tell me how I hunger'd for your heart

“ Long, long, before you told me it was mine !

“ I said ‘ Whatever comes I shall not care

“ If without harming her, I win her love ’—

“ But when I thought my wicked lawless will

“ Had wrought you harm, a prey to deep remorse

“ I fled in horror at my evil deed

“ And call'd myself a villain.

“ You were kind”

(Constance had said) “ to spare my guilty soul

“ The pain of this reproach ;—I always fear’d  
“ That you would taunt me, I, who must have seem’d  
“ So prudish, and so full of texts and saws—  
“ I fear’d that you would mock me, and exclaim  
“ ‘ Ah, hypocrite ! where is your wisdom now ! ’ ”

“ And you were also kind,” said Denzil then,  
“ To spare me, or, with that old Tiger-Cat  
“ Who in her letter call’d me ‘ *Atheist* ’  
“ You might have deem’d it was my lack of cant  
“ That made me love you ; and once having lov’d  
“ Stretch forth my robber-hand to steal my prize—  
“ Look in your glass, and see what to have seen  
“ Had conquer’d Christian Knight or Saracen—  
“ There is no question of this creed or that  
“ When once we kneel to Woman as to God ! ”  
“ A god of clay,” said Constance with a sigh,  
“ A shadow on a stream—a fleeting thing—  
“ Lasting whilst Beauty lasts—it dies with Death,  
“ And blessèd is that woman who may be  
“ Even a mem’ry ! ”

So the days pass’d by  
And thus these wicked people liv’d and lov’d.



You said to me, in that sad hour of parting,  
So much, so little, and yet ev'rything—  
My eager lips, so rudely interposing,  
Broke the soft sounds your own, maybe, had murmur'd  
In that dim hour of silence ! Tho' of sorrow  
It seem'd the cup was fill'd to overflowing  
I could not weep, for joy at being near you,  
And guessing all the words you left unspoken,—  
So much—so little—and yet ev'rything !

You gave to me, on that dear night of parting,  
So much, so little, and yet ev'rything—  
So little to the hunger of my longing—  
So much to meet the measure of deserving,  
And ev'rything of heaven in a moment—  
Oh, cruel Time ! oh, midnight chimes that sounded !  
Yet, in your arms, how dared I curse the moments  
Which brought with all their dread of desolation  
So much, so little, and yet ev'rything ?

You seem'd to me in that last hour of parting  
So much, so little, and yet ev'rything—  
'So much, so little !' . . . Loving, yet divided  
For ever from me :—in the hated future  
Link'd with another ;—madly lov'd—'not wisely,'  
Met all too late, and lending love and sunshine  
And all delight, and leaving, (had you left me,)  
Only a memory of vanish'd beauty  
To be to me for ever and for ever,  
So much, so little, and yet ev'rything !



"Rappelle-toi, lorsque les destinées  
 M'auront de toi pour jamais séparée,  
 Quand le chagrin, l'exil et les années  
 Auront flétri ce cœur désespéré,  
 Songe à mon triste amour, songe à l'adieu suprême ;  
 L'absence ni le temps ne sont rien quand on aime ;  
 Tant que mon cœur battra  
 Toujours il te dira  
 Rappelle-toi."

ALFRED DE MUSSET.

"Oh, my love ! my love !  
 "Have we now reach'd the end of these dear groves ?  
 "Shall we together walk no more thro' life ?  
 "The arid desert stretches out beyond ;  
 "Across it lies a pathway rough with stones  
 "And edged with tangled briars. No grateful shade,  
 "No grassy banks afford the Traveller rest,  
 "And thou would'st have me wander there alone,  
 "An outcast from our garden Paradise,  
 "And far from thee, my love, my soul's delight !

H. P. CAMPBELL.

## X.

AT length arrived those last unwelcome days  
 Which heralded that last sad day of all,  
 When those who, haply, never should have met,  
 Felt bound in honor, or, to say farewell,  
 Or else to let the angry world go by  
 And cling together ; she to bear the shame,

And he the keen reproach of having caused  
Such shame in her. For Constance, who was weak,  
And influenced above all influence  
By him she lov'd, had deem'd it would be best  
(Now she could never more on bended knee  
Appeal to God but as a guilty thing,)   
That she should honestly avow her love,  
And live to be his wife, at least in heart,  
Who vow'd to her his life's fidelity.

Often in vain she look'd across the sea  
When Denzil left her at the ev'ning hour,  
Hoping to read upon the pink expanse

Some sign or symbol telling how to act.  
She often long'd to open wide her arms  
And say to Denzil, "Geoffrey, I am your's  
"In life—in death!" if it were but to see  
The cloud uplift which shrouded that dear brow!  
But, as he left those happy olive-grounds,  
And ere he vaulted o'er the boundary  
Dividing town from country, 'neath the shade  
Sister Theresa, in her quiet dress  
Would glide in silence thro' the garden gate,  
And seeking Constance, in an earnest voice

Would strive to exorcise the sinful thought,  
And seem to treat the sacred name of Love  
As a mere thing of naught—a childish thing.

“There are some moments in our lives” she said  
“When we can almost *see* (both seem so plain !)  
“The fair good angels pointing out one way,  
“And on the other side the pow’rs of hell  
“Who strive to drag us trembling to the brink  
“Of some abyss ! Not that I deem your friend,”  
(She added, in a calm prosaic tone,)  
“Poor Mr. Denzil, who seems kind at heart,  
“A demon in disguise, but lawless love  
“Must needs assume to all discerning eyes  
“A shape of dread, a form to be abhorred.”

“And are not lack of candour and deceit,”  
Constance exclaim’d, “two things to be abhorred ?  
“And dwelling underneath a shelt’ring roof  
“Respected, when you have not earn’d respect,  
“And living as a wife with one you wrong—  
“Next him at night, and near him all the day,  
“And longing all those nights and all those days  
“For but one glimpse of one sad absent face,

" Are these not also things to be abhorred ?  
" Methinks I could return to Farleigh Court,  
" If I might hide away amongst the woods,  
" And pray, and read good books, and nurse a skull  
" Like yon sweet picture of the Magdalen—  
" But to go back to him who knows my fault,  
" And screens me out of kindness from the scorn,  
" Our country neighbours would but be too glad  
" To show'r upon me! They must guess the truth,—  
" From what the sister of my husband said  
" They even knew it long before myself—  
" I know not which would be the worst to bear,  
" My husband's kind forbearance, or the sneers  
" Of those who, whilst they flatter'd to my face  
" Would whisper cruel words behind my back—  
" And then *I never could see Geoffrey more*—  
" It will be hard to bear !"

Now this was how

It came to pass that Constance dream'd at all  
Of leaving Italy and going home.

Roland L'Estrange had written to her twice—  
At first, a school-boy letter, full of tales  
Of work and holiday, yet such good will

Was shown in every simple blotted line,  
That Constance knew Sir John had kept his word,  
And had not tried to influence his son  
Against his erring wife.

“ My father’s hand

“ Is crippled with the gout, he begs me say ”  
The letter ran,) “ or he would write himself.”  
From gratitude, Constance had rashly sent  
When next she wrote, a timid message back,  
Hoping the crippled hand was nearly well—  
Whereat another letter from the boy  
Had plainly ask’d of Constance to return.

For, all went wrong, he said, now she was gone—  
The servants left—his Aunt was, oh, so cross !  
She finally had quarrell’d with Sir John  
And left him all alone to grief and gout—  
His father said all luck had left the house  
Since she was taken ill and went abroad !

Then, lastly came a letter from Sir John  
Entreating her return, and “ All the Past  
Should be forgotten,” only she must come ;  
And both these letters had for many days

Remain'd unanswer'd, whilst poor Constance felt  
Torn, or by fiends and angels, or by Love  
And sterner Duty, first this way or that,  
Whilst all her mind, and all her anxious heart  
Were tortured and bewilder'd by the thought  
Of what her final answer ought to be  
When ev'rybody's welfare seem'd to her  
So much at variance !

Then to the winds  
Did Geoffrey Denzil fling his good resolves,  
And madden'd at the dread of losing her  
He strove with might and main to make her stay  
Until Sir John might hear the scandal breathed  
And drive her from him into Denzil's arms  
To be his very own for evermore.

“ I swear if any child were born of you,”  
He said to her one balmy afternoon,  
“ I would not press you, Constance, but you leave—  
“ In leaving home for me, what do you leave ?  
“ A kind old man, but he can be replaced—  
“ You cannot even know the pleasant pang  
“ A bride may feel, who leaves the loving breast  
“ Of her fond mother for the folding arms

“ Of her Belov’d ;—you are not kith or kin,  
“ But mated by mischance, who might have been  
“ Father and daughter, child and grandfather—  
“ The long, dull years that seem your married days,  
“ To him are but a little speck of time—  
“ A fleeting moment in an old man’s life  
“ Who liv’d and lov’d long, long ere you were born !  
“ Ah, he may miss you, as those fathers miss  
“ Or as those grandfathers, a two years’ child,  
“ But think of what *we* are ! Friends—friends till death,  
“ And lovers—loving till this heart of mine  
“ Ceases to beat, and husband, dear, and wife,  
“ If you will let me call you by that name  
“ And wear my ring upon your little hand.  
“ I say again, if round about your knees  
“ Were rosy faces grouped, and tiny hands  
“ And piping voices, ever and anon  
“ Claspings and calling you to stay at home,  
“ I had been base indeed to bid you stray  
“ And leave for me those sunny little heads  
“ But *now*—— !”

(Here Constance press’d against her brow  
A trembling hand, whilst with the other one

She gently push'd away her tempter's lips,  
And tried to think he was a "Pow'r of Hell.")

"Nay, I would rather," Denzil wildly cried,  
"Much as I loathe the superstitious creed  
"That dooms a woman to a life unlov'd  
"Of penance and seclusion, that you went  
"And prison'd your sweet youth within the walls  
"Of yonder convent, than that you should go  
"Seeking yourself, and of your own free will  
"The hateful life you used to live before!"  
Then soften'd by her scared bewilder'd look,  
He added, "I am mad, and seem to you  
"To utter foolish words;—do what is best  
"For you, my darling; should you feel one day  
"The bitterness of parting with *all joy*,  
"(Such as I feel to-day), come back to me  
"And we will try to make, despite the World,  
"A new fair life together; *I shall wait.*"

Thus torn and tortured with conflicting doubts  
Did Constance travel thro' these latter days  
(For such she deem'd they were,) in Italy.  
Her lover's passionate entreaties now

Tearing her gentle heart ; and then the Nun's,  
Who seemed to see to ev'ry complication  
One only answer, one sure remedy  
Against the Future's perils, and implored  
That she would forthwith give herself to God,  
And "prison her sweet youth" (as Denzil said)  
Within the quiet convent in the hills.

From no vain wish to be "sensational"  
Or blend into her life the picturesque  
And hollow teachings of an alien creed,  
Did Constance entertain the wav'ring thought  
Of yielding to the Sister's stern advice.  
She knew that there were many knotty points  
Of doubt and darkness she must overcome—  
That many new convictions should be born,  
And many old associations slain,  
Ere she could honestly embrace a faith  
In which she was not born ; but then she thought  
A calm devotional life of high intent,  
Must needs be pleasing in the eyes of God  
By whatsoever name its votaries  
Were call'd and recognized throughout the earth ;  
Also, within her bosom, next her love,

Liv'd that unutt'able desire for *rest*,  
Known only unto those whose hapless fate  
Has ever been to battle with the waves,  
When they would fain have waited on the shore,  
Nor e'er adventured on the stormy seas.  
So, thus it stood—she purposed to return  
To Farleigh Court, to see Sir John once more  
And try to bear the life she once had borne ;  
But should she prove too burden'd with her Past  
To live such life in peace and honesty,  
Then she would bid farewell to all the world,  
And seeking once again this sunny clime,  
Would try and live, as liv'd of old the saints,  
A life of penitence and piety—  
And should this life, after the 'portion'd time  
From lack of faith, seem all too hard to bear, . . . .  
“ Then ” Denzil cried, “ Tho' there are convent walls  
“ Yet there are those who fain would scale and climb  
“ E'en higher walls, to bear away from thence  
“ Their only happiness !”

So, of these ways—

The three opposing pathways left to tread—  
Constance had tried to follow first the best,  
If not the brightest ; whilst that sunny line

Of flower-spangled path, she strove to shun  
Even in fancy.

Then the days slipp'd by  
And Geoffrey Denzil grew an alter'd man,  
Haggard and desperate, and full of fears,  
And Constance too, was pale and wan, and felt  
Against her heart a weary gnawing pain ;  
And thus arose the sun upon the day  
Before the one when they were doom'd to part.

Sad and remorseful, Constance mark'd the change  
Her resolution wrought in Denzil's face  
And voice and bearing, and she wonder'd much  
How any one so weak and frail as she  
Could thus subdue and conquer one so strong,  
Who ne'er had seem'd disturb'd by greater things.

On this last day, about the sunset hour  
They wander'd forth together, each one sad,  
Pre-occupied and silent ; as they walk'd  
Their thoughts went winging o'er the glitt'ring sea  
Homeward to England, and they liv'd again  
In fancy, thro' that night at Denzil Place,

Which seem'd to mark an epoch in their fate.  
I know not if 'twas wholly with remorse  
That Denzil mused upon those midnight hours  
Which gave to him the woman of his dreams,  
Or whether even Constance, as she gazed  
Into the eyes of him she lov'd so well,  
Felt all the anguish she had known before  
At having once been ev'rything to one  
To whom, alas, she soon would be as naught  
Save a fair clinging memory !

At first

They bent their way towards the neighb'ring town,  
And stroll'd mechanically down the quay,

And saw and heard, as in a waking dream,  
The sights and sounds around them, all the while  
Feeling like beings from some other sphere  
Dropp'd down from cloud-land. Ev'rything they saw  
On this too mournful day seem'd so distinct  
And yet so lifeless, since these lookers-on  
Had concentrated all they own'd of life  
On one another ; so like changing scenes  
Painted upon a magic lantern's slides  
All seem'd a mockery, yet afterwards  
Recurred to them each passing sight they saw

On that last day, and that sad parting night,  
With haunting vividness.

Upon the strand  
The red-capp'd fishermen—the idle throng  
Of chatt'ring beggars standing on the bridge,  
The peasant-women in their shady hats  
Guarding their fragrant store of fruit and flow'rs  
Beside the market-cross. Then in the streets  
The gaily-colour'd awnings, shadowing  
The windows bright with rich Italian wares,  
The gold and silver works in filigree,  
The shining coral, carv'd in many shapes—  
Then grouped in twos and threes about the port  
Some few departing townspeople were seen,  
Bound for a neighb'ring city ; two who seem'd  
To part in sorrow, since with many sighs  
They clung and wept, a maiden and a youth,  
Doubtless affianced, for, before the hour  
When rang the signal for the speeding boat  
To bear the youth away from her he lov'd,  
They traced upon a dusty prickly-pear  
The link'd initials of their hapless names.  
Then, to the left, another couple stood  
Taking their leave ; two shovel-hatted priests,

Who, following the custom of the South,  
Were taking snuff and kissing one another,  
And op'ning wide their black embracing arms.  
A little further, on the other side,  
The town became a stragg'ling colony  
Of painted villas,—here they saw a goat  
Standing in biped-fashion, on a wall,  
Reaching his greedy shaggy-bearded mouth  
Towards the blossoms of a Judas-tree  
All pink and leafless, looking as he stood  
As one might deem the false Apostle look'd  
With russet beard, his God-forsaken gaze  
Seeking some branch of a sufficient strength  
Whereon to hang himself, (for Rumour saith  
From some such pink pre-destin'd gallows-tree  
Swung, long ago, the suicided form  
Of the accursèd Jew, Iscariot,  
Who thus escaped the torments of remorse  
Earn'd by his base betrayal of the Christ.)

Thus wand'ring listlessly, they reach'd at last  
A garden they had often sought before,  
Where Constance used to sketch, for here it seem'd  
That Nature, Art, and Past and Present join'd

To make an earthly Eden ;—it had been  
Long years ago, a Roman residence  
Of some importance, and tho' ruin'd now  
And desolate, its beauty still survived  
To lure all lovers of the picturesque.

Here stately terraces of sculptured stone  
Look'd seaward, where against the ev'ning sky  
The marble statues of forgotten gods  
Uprose alternately with flow'ry urns  
O'errun with clematis ; from thence a walk,  
Dark and mysterious e'en at noon-tide heat,  
But now a seeming subterranean arch  
Of arbutus and bay-trees, led the way  
Towards a small pavilion, ruin'd too  
And long ago deserted.

Geoffrey turn'd,  
Uncheck'd by Constance, down this dim arcade  
Where now and then a moonbeam sifted thro'  
The mingling branches, threw a silv'ry streak  
On the untended path, and but for which  
They scarce had seen their way, and could but feel  
The scarlet berries of the arbutus  
Which roll'd like coral beads about their feet.

Here was a bench, built in a stone recess  
O'ertraced with scroll-work, near the grey remains  
Of what had been of yore a Roman bath,  
Where Constance, who was weary with her walk,  
Sank down exhausted—Denzil held her hand,  
And both were silent, for their hearts were full.

(Deem it not strange that they should roam so late  
Fair reader, who hast never left thy home  
After the few first flittings of the bat !  
For, where the sun is lavish with his beams  
As in these southern lands, this is the hour  
When those who dread his fierce meridian heat,  
Go forth, approved by custom, 'neath the rays  
Of a more temperate planet ; hence they stay'd.)

Upon the terrace, like a row of ghosts,  
They saw the moonlit glories of the past  
Silv'ry and silent, and from time to time  
Some echo reach'd them wafted from the town  
Of song or music, but these died away  
At last, in silence, and the croaking frogs,  
And now and then a falling leaf or fruit,  
Or the clear piping of a nightingale,  
Alone recall'd their spirits back to earth.

For both seem'd lost in some absorbing dream  
Impossible to utter or translate  
Into material language ; thus for hours  
They scarcely spoke, until they heard the chimes  
Of midnight, echo from the noisy spires  
Of all the many churches of the town.

Then Constance, frighten'd at the flight of time,  
Would fain have hurried to her quiet home,  
But ere she rose, the ghastly haunting dread  
That this might be her last and only hope  
Of playing truant thus, induced her still  
A little while to linger : Denzil then  
Awaking from his mournful reverie,  
Held fast her hands, as one in shipwreck clings  
To spar or mast, or as a miser grasps  
Some cherish'd treasure he is soon to lose,  
Whilst all the pent-up anguish in his heart  
He strove to ease by his impassion'd words  
Of love and mad reproach, for by those chimes  
He knew how soon they needs must say farewell.

Ah, if in that despairing parting hour  
All the wild grief they felt at sev'ring thus,

Or all the bliss at being side by side—  
If their warm youth, and the delicious South,  
And ev'ry soft intoxicating sound  
Breathing of amorous and intensest life  
Fed with sweet odours ;—if all this conspired  
To vanquish their too sternly sterile vows—  
If ev'ry little faint malicious flow'r,  
And ev'ry cunning little croaking frog—  
And ev'ry happy hanging orange-orb  
And tender bridal-bud,—if all these seem'd  
But small familiar echoes from the voice  
Of Nature, which invited them to join

**In her regardless self-abandonment,  
So doubly dangerous when both the hearts  
That beat in unison, love with a love  
Which 'passeth knowledge,' if—but wherefore muse  
On that which Night, and Solitude, and Love  
Witness'd alone ? unless the cypress too,  
Or dark arbutus, with its scarlet fruit,  
May silently have listen'd to their vows  
Or shudder'd at their long, forbidden kiss !—  
These folded in their dim mysterious shade  
The two poor lovers, as they sought the town,  
Clinging together sadly to the last,**

Or arm in arm, or holding hand in hand  
Like little children.

Down the walk they pass'd ;  
The East was red, and speeding on the wings  
Of Destiny, they saw the boding signs  
Of dread To-morrow. Near the fading moon  
Their enemy lay blushing o'er the hills.



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To my heart I waking, say  
"This must be Love"  
As the first strugg'ling ray  
Of the too happy day  
Peeps from above.

"Ah, this must be Love," I sigh  
When the dim light  
Fades from the western sky,  
And the far mountains lie  
Wrapp'd in the night.

If thou had'st not dawn'd, oh Day!  
Then, blessèd Night,  
Thou had'st endured for aye,  
Stay, night of kisses, stay!  
Veil out the light!

If thou had'st not darken'd, Night,  
Then, happy Day,  
Thou had'st shone long and bright,  
Fleet day of dear delight  
Fade not away!

Oh, Night! to thy sister, Day,  
Reach out thy wand,  
Thou dost know, thou can'st say  
Why I would have you stay  
Thus hand in hand!

Thou can'st say, for thou dost know,—  
Night, tell to Day  
Why thy dim moments flow  
Warm'd with a warmer glow  
Than sun-lit ray!

Oh, Day ! whisper unto Night  
All thou hast known,  
When, 'neath thy sun and shade  
Fleeter hours Love has made  
E'en than thine own !

Night and Day ! whilst you can hold

**Joy like to this,  
Dear is the black and gold  
Of your soft wings, that fold  
Me to his kiss.**

**But, when mingled sun and shade  
Bring me no more  
Flowers like those that made  
All other blossoms fade  
Their light before.**

Weave then for thy brows of light  
A cypress wreath,  
Day, that wert once so bright !  
Darken to Night, and Night !  
Fade into Death !

“ And we are man and wife together  
 Altho’ thy breast, once bold  
 With song, be closed and cold  
 Beneath flowers’ roots and birds’ light feet.”

J. L. BEDDOES.

“ Se voir le plus possible, et s’aimer seulement,  
 Sans ruse et sans détours, sans honte ni mensonge,  
 Sans qu’un désir nous trompe ou qu’un remords nous ronge  
 Vivre à deux et donner son cœur à tout moment.”

ALFRED DE MUSSET.

## XI.

WHEN Constance rose at morn ’twas not from  
 sleep,  
 But from a dreary hopeless contemplation  
 Of the most glorious sunrise. (That same sun  
 Would rise and set, but never more, maybe,  
 Cast two fond clinging shadows on the path  
 That two misguided mortals never more  
 Might tread together in the coming years !)

“ Ah, cruel herald of a hapless morn !”  
She thought with aching heart, “ Of what avail  
“ For me, yon flaunting gorgeous display  
“ Of pink and gold and primrose, since your rays  
“ Are destin’d soon to light me from my love ?”  
It was as tho’ the sympathetic sun  
Had guess’d her thought, for as the hour approach’d  
When she departed from her flow’ry home,  
He shrouded o’er the glory of his face,  
And Geoffrey Denzil drove her to the town  
Wrapp’d in her cloak, on quite an English day  
Of mist and rain. All look’d so different,  
And seem’d so doubly gloomy and forlorn

From long association with the sun—  
She thought the day assumed a *widow’d* look  
Which harmonized with what her aching heart  
Could now no longer hide.

Thus to the strand  
They went together. Shelter’d from the rain  
She waited there, and watch’d the dreaded boat  
Lying against the stone-work of the port,  
Its palpitating engine now and then  
Hissing and smoking, whilst upon the deck  
The bales and baggage of the passengers

Lay strewn in wild confusion. Denzil rose  
And left her side to help her English maid,  
Who, being ignorant of foreign speech,  
Was almost helpless ;—as he thus explain'd  
And cater'd for the comfort of the maid  
And her fair mistress, some one touched his arm—  
He turn'd, and saw the sunburnt gardener  
Belonging to the villa Belvedere,  
Who held a written message, ominous  
With the dark cover of a telegram—  
It was for Constance, but the worthy man  
Link'd her with Denzil in his artless mind,  
And innocently thought that what was her's  
Must surely be of interest to him.

And he was right, for never written words  
Sent such a thrill thro' Geoffrey Denzil's heart  
As these few lines which flutter'd to the ground  
Dropp'd from poor Constance's wan, nerveless hand.

The message was from Roland, and ran thus—  
“ My father's horse, on Monday afternoon,  
“ Stumbled and threw him, and he died to-day.”  
They did not speak—but thro' each startled brain

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1. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1997; 277: 1033-1036.

Had ne'er encounter'd in his easy road—  
For the jog-trotting of his trusted cob  
Was emblematic of the quiet pace  
With which he journey'd thro' the peaceful days  
Ere Constance went abroad.

So, he was gone

The kind old man with rosy apple cheeks,  
And never more his " Ultra-Tory eye "  
Will note the signs of danger from afar—  
And we must hope that he has gone to dwell  
Where all is order'd as he would approve,—  
An absolute perpetual monarchy,  
Where the Great Autocrat is King of Kings,  
And where the subjects know no tyranny  
Save the just guidance of a Father's hand.

. . . . .

In two short years from that eventful day,  
Beneath the shade of scented orange boughs  
And flow'ring myrtles, near a cypress tree  
Clung round with roses, Constance sat and mused  
In a fair garden. Her's were blissful dreams,  
And from her heart a never-ending hymn  
Of gratitude and praise rose up to heav'n—

Above the feath'ry palms and calm blue sky  
Reflected in the glitt'ring tideless sea.

For time had made her Geoffrey Denzil's wife,  
And she was once again in Italy—  
Nor did this sacred second marriage-ring  
Encircling her slight finger, exorcise  
(As rings, alas ! have oft been known to do !)  
Aught of the tenderness she felt before  
When it was bitterness and shame to love.

And Denzil, with his independent heart  
Scorning the laws and customs of the world,  
Learnt it was not alone the guilty zest  
With which some natures seek forbidden fruit  
That heretofore had made him deem he lov'd.  
For now that they were lawful man and wife  
The love he felt for her intensified  
And deepen'd with the days—the happy days !  
And with these days were blended happy nights—  
Oh, bless'd experience, but to few vouchsafed !  
The treble unity of heart and mind  
And all those pulses of material life,  
Which throb in harmony to one great end—

The sweet, perpetual, intermingling  
Of sense and soul,—the mutual interchange  
Of all that each can render—each receive !

Oh, for but half a year of such a dream  
How willingly would I exchange the rest—  
Those future years of loveless solitude  
Which Heaven may predestine me to live !  
For days which darken into blissful nights  
When, heart to heart, in one another's arms  
We sink not into blank forgetfulness,  
Since e'en in sleep the senses realize  
The sacred presence of our best lov'd !  
For nights that fade into the happy dawn  
When, after this sweet half-unconsciousness,  
We wake to know we were not duped by dreams,  
But that we hold against our grateful heart  
Our dearest treasure ! oh, for days and nights  
Such as I sometimes dream of, give me grief  
And after-pangs of bitter suffering,  
But let me glory in the unknown joy  
Of some such days and nights before I die !

“ Ah,” Denzil said, “ How had I pray'd for this,  
“ But that I never proved an answer'd pray'r !”

" This is the first great undeserved reward  
" That God has giv'n me in my restless life  
" Of doubt and speculation."

Constance sigh'd

" Till now I also said indeed the words,  
" Praying with hands and lips, but in my heart  
" I fear I did not dare anticipate  
" Any fulfilment ! Then, alas, I know  
" I always pray'd for very earthly things—  
" That I might be belov'd,—that one might live  
" Whom God, in his high wisdom doom'd to die—  
" That I may have a daughter or a son—  
" Such pigmy wishes, look'd at from High Heav'n !

" 'Tis right we should not always have our way—

" And then again, I pray'd another pray'r—

" I pray'd I might resist the pow'r you gain'd

" Over my heart, I felt it more and more

" As days went on ; that pray'r seem'd never heard."

She dropp'd her eyes, and blushing, sigh'd anew,

But he repeated all triumphantly

Her murmur'd words, "*That* pray'r was never  
heard !"

" Ah, unregenerate ! will you always doubt ?

“ And yet,” she added, grasping at a straw,  
“ You know at any rate, pray’r does no harm—  
“ If wasted, it is wasted, but the air  
“ Is all the purer for our purer thought—  
“ It is no superstition that degrades  
“ Like some that men have follow’d long ago—  
“ I feel so grateful when I see the sun  
“ Shining as now, on such a lovely scene—  
“ My inward intimate existence yearns  
“ To give some proof of gratitude to God  
“ And so to Him I lift my heart in pray’r.”

And thus the days went on, until at last  
One of the little pray’rs that Constance pray’d  
Was granted to her, and her grateful heart  
Began to realize the long’d-for bliss  
Of knowing that some soul-begotten ray  
Of light and life, intense—intangible—  
Meeting with Denzil’s warm impatient lips  
In those dear days and those mysterious nights,  
Had wrought in her that wond’rous miracle,  
Ever recurring, yet for ever new,  
Incomprehensible and beautiful,—  
That inexplicable, sweet, incarnation

Of two-fold love, first-felt, a flutt'ring hope  
Faint as the splash of muffled elfin oars  
In some unfathomable mystic lake,  
Or as the fancied murmur of the waves  
To one who has been dreaming of the sea.

Ah, my own love ! The years may pass,  
The Winter and the Summer days,  
The city's fog, the dreamy haze  
That hovers o'er the country grass  
Hanging betwixt the earth and sky  
When black against its pink and gold  
At eventide, the trees enroll'd  
Stand like some dark conspiracy ;  
Sable accomplices of Night  
In the forced murder she has done,  
Helping to hide the dying sun  
Dragg'd down from his imperial height  
And sinking in his gory bed—  
My love! all hours and days may go  
And leave no trace, yet in the glow  
Of dying suns, and moons that shed  
A calmer light ; and in the stars  
And indefatigable waves,  
And in the faint gold streak that laves  
The last forsaken ocean bars—  
There art thou ever ; all in vain  
I ask some sign of life from thee  
Yet I believe thou liv'st to me  
In all I love in life, again,  
And somewhere, in land, sky or sea,  
I have a hope I cannot kill  
That there my loving or my will  
May give thee back again to me !



"God is folding up the white tent of my youth."

"It is too late, too late !

"You may not kiss back my breath to the sunshine."

ADAH I. MENKEN.

"We know not whether death be good,

But life at least it will not be :

Men will stand saddening as we stood,

Watch the same fields and skies as we

And the same sea."

SWINBURNE.

## XII.

ALAS, I would in this uncertain world  
All prosper'd where it seem'd that all went well !

I would that never without urgent cause,  
Those who are bless'd and loving, wronging none,  
Should, as it were, be cheated of their dues  
And robb'd by Fate of their hard-earn'd content.  
There are some good and worthy on the earth

But who seem destin'd for some hidden end  
To be for ever spokes in ev'ry wheel—  
Encumbrances in ev'rybody's path—  
The millstones of the world, of sterling stuff  
But wearisome to wear around the neck—  
That these the great tho' too impatient gods  
Should sometimes prematurely set aside  
I do not wonder, knowing it is hard  
In this vast varying community  
To be alike benevolent to all  
Or satisfy the cravings of all hearts.

So, when Sir John met such a sudden doom  
It almost seem'd as if the Fates had said  
“ Here is an honest, red-faced kind old man  
“ Who never has done harm to any one—  
“ But yet, because of bungling human laws  
“ He stands for ever, whilst he lives and breathes  
“ As an insuperable obstacle,  
“ Marring the moments of that luckless pair  
“ Whose vast capacity for happiness  
“ He blights unwittingly.”

And then it seem'd  
As if the three relentless beldames plann'd,

And caused the little guileless downy beast  
To burrow near that Sussex highway road.

Now, when this worthy man was sacrificed,  
I was ashamed I could not sorrow more,  
But, feeling as it were ' behind the scenes '  
I thought " Well, well, since some one must have died  
(For Death intrudes in fiction as in fact,)  
I almost think he can be spared the best—  
So now they will be happy all their lives !  
And I may tell of how they liv'd and lov'd,  
And how they henceforth kept the decalogue  
And died respected at a ripe old age !

But Life is stranger in its chequer'd course  
Than aught that ever fancy taught or feign'd—  
There are injustices, and ups and downs,  
And strange caprices on the part of Fate  
Which seem to us most inexplicable  
And sad and hopeless !

So, Sir John was dead,  
And Constance married to the man she lov'd,  
For whom she sinn'd and suffer'd years ago,  
And Geoffrey lov'd her, and the fleeting days

To them were as a blessèd glimpse of heav'n,  
And Denzil, who had been a sceptic once,  
Felt in his soul the germs of Faith and Love  
Upspringing from his earnest gratitude  
To that great Pow'r he recognized at last,  
And Constance knew that near her heart the flow'r  
Of their united love lay folded close  
In dreamless slumber, destin'd soon to breathe  
The fragrant air that she and Geoffrey breathed  
Together, in those fleeting wedded days.

But she had rashly said "Ah, let me live  
" Only to know this blessèd hope is true,

" Then come what may," and her unthinking words  
Were register'd by the relentless Fates.—

The day she long'd and pray'd for dawn'd at last,  
And Constance kiss'd the cheek of Geoffrey's child,  
And he was near her, but no time was given  
Him to rejoice in what she deem'd a joy,  
For in her struggle with this second life  
His little wife pass'd from him into death.

Half stupified he watch'd her lying there  
So calm and still, who but some hours ago  
Was warm with life ;—so sudden it all seem'd,—

The words we say at parting left unsaid,  
And round about him all the many things  
Inanimate, yet seeming now to cry  
With eager voices, "No, she is not dead!"  
All in a row the little high-heel'd shoes  
Those fairy feet would never wear again,—  
Upon a chair her hat and parasol,  
Whilst the white dress she wore but yesterday  
Was flutt'ring in the flower-scented air  
From where it hung upon the looking-glass—  
The glass that never more would mirror back  
That well-known earnest face, for she was dead!

Sooner than here in England, dawn'd that day  
Of desolation, when upon the stair  
Sounded the grating footsteps of strange men,  
The sable-suited myrmidons of Death,  
Coming to bear away that silent form  
And hide it from the watching of wet eyes.

Geoffrey was sitting in the shrouded room,  
Gazing with haggard eyes and bloodless lips  
On the sweet face of what was Constance once—  
As one entranced, he scarcely realized



Where first they met her) led him from the room  
And whisper'd words of Christian hope and faith,  
But thro' them all, to his remorseful heart  
There ran an under current of reproach—  
It seem'd to him as tho' the Sister said  
(Whatever form she made the words assume,)  
“ Ah, surely yonder convent in the hills  
“ Had been a brighter prison than the one  
“ To which your boasted love has sent her now.”  
I know not whether such a passing thought  
E'er flitted thro' her mind, or if his brain,  
Perverted by its load of suffering,  
Originated ev'ry sentiment  
That could inflict self-torture.

“ Cease, I pray,”

He said, when next the Sister, meeting him  
Strove to console him with her well-meant words,  
“ In pity cease these vain and empty tales  
“ About the tender mercies of your God !  
“ What is this life that He has given me  
“ Now that the world is empty of her ? Where  
“ May I discover any trace of her ?  
“ Transform'd, or blended into what is fair  
“ In Nature, may I recognize again

“ Some spark of that pure flame that was her breath ?

“ Ah, had I but her innocent belief

“ Of wingèd meetings in another sphere

“ How good t’would be to wait and hope for her !

“ Ten thousand years of waiting would I wait,

“ Here in this very flesh, ten thousand years,

“ To clasp at their eventual expiration

“ So dear a blessing !”

Then he sadly thought

“ Alas, I did not value her enough

“ When she was with me ! All my love of her

“ Was not enough of love—that sacred thing,

“ Her hand, I often only lightly held

“ (Not thinking it was lent to lie in mine

“ But for a moment !) whilst my fickle mind

“ Wander’d away to England. On my breast

“ She has lain her head and slept, and I have slept,

“ Closing mine eyes to the great happiness

“ Of gazing on her, I repair’d to dreams

“ In which she sometimes did not follow me—

“ She was as lost to me for long whole hours

“ As now she is to all eternity !

“ Now would I wake, watching her sweetest face

“ Thro’ sleepless ages, could I feel again

“ The cheek that lightly on my happy heart  
“ Used once to lean ! These are the first sad days  
“ That I have felt God’s anger in my life—  
“ She was so good, so pure, so beautiful—  
“ Thinking no evil thought—it was for me  
“ She left her innocent life of good intent  
“ To sail with me upon the stormy sea  
“ Of passion—it was I who dragg’d her down  
“ To the low level of my selfish life—  
“ I took her for my own, I mix’d with mine  
“ Her pure identity;—I spoil’d, devour’d,  
“ And revell’d in my godless victory—  
“ And now I am a murderer, like Cain.  
“ My kiss has kill’d my darling,—all my life  
“ Is henceforth chasten’d with a deathless hunger  
“ Insatiable—vain, ah, cursed words  
“ ‘ Impossible ’ and ‘ Never ’ and ‘ Too late ! ’ ”

He look’d towards the cradle, where the babe  
With upturn’d face of lily fairness, slept  
The sleep of innocence ; in vain he strove  
To trace some likeness to his buried love  
In those impassive features, scarcely yet  
Deserving such a name ;—the fast closed eyes

Wanting as yet the mother's silken fringe  
Of curling eyelashes on either lid—  
The open mouth, a tiny triangle,  
He bent to kiss, but tho' he seem'd to breathe  
The perfume of the blue starch-hyacinth,  
Yet nothing met the longing of his lips  
Of *her*—his wife—the mother of his child !  
Then, half in anger with the helpless cause  
Of his chang'd life, and wholly in despair,  
He cover'd with his hands his haggard face  
And knew the bitterest of human griefs.

And so they buried Constance out of sight,  
And Geoffrey Denzil never saw again  
His darling's face ; but he remembers her  
As last he saw her ; scatter'd all around  
Her sleeping form, the scented southern flow'rs,  
The single rose, and double violet,  
And mignonette, and bright anemone,  
And in her hand she held a faded wreath  
Of English evergreens—box, laurel, fir,  
And one dark spray of sad funereal yew  
To which a single shrivell'd berry clung,—  
These were the leaves that Constance gather'd once

Before she quitted silent Denzil Place,  
Whereon her husband read her written words—  
“ This wreath of leaves was gather’d in the garden  
“ Of Eden ; to be kept for evermore.”  
And so he laid them there, that, if indeed  
That sleeping form should ever rise from death  
(As she believ’d,) and soar triumphantly  
To other brighter realms, she then should find  
On waking into glorious second life,  
This little faded memory of earth  
Still clinging to her pale unfolding hand,  
And like her, maybe, re-awakening  
To life and freshness ; so that, ’midst the flow’rs  
Of Heaven’s garden, some soft falling seed,  
(Perchance the little shrivell’d yew-berry,)  
From these sad sprays of Earth, translated thus,  
Might, taking root, uprise and bloom again,  
Reminding *one* amongst the seraph-band  
Of those faint, fleeting moments pass’d and gone,  
When she had lov’d, and wander’d ’neath the shade  
Amongst the haunted groves of Denzil Place.

. . . . .  
After six weary years of wandering  
The news arrived at Denzil that once more

Its master would return. No longer poor  
In this world's goods, since by the sudden Will  
Of his rich relative, his fortune now  
Was more than doubled, but how 'reft of all  
Those only riches worthy of the name  
We need not pause to tell ! and with him came  
A little fair-hair'd girl call'd Violet—  
(So named after the fragrant fav'rite flow'r  
Of her dead mother). Something in her eyes  
Reminded many of the villagers  
Of that sweet face that never more on earth  
Would beam upon them.

As they sat in church,  
The tall, sad, father, and the little girl,  
On the first Sunday after their return,  
Both priest and peasant eye'd them curiously,  
And Geoffrey Denzil felt an awkward sense  
Of mixed defiance and self-consciousness  
He had not known before ;—he also fear'd  
That they might whisper on their way from church  
And tittle-tattle o'er his buried past,  
Dragging maybe, the name he most ador'd  
From the high place from whence he worshipp'd it—  
For he had only sought his village church

Thinking that *she* would like him to be there,  
And from no wish to meet the prying eyes  
Of country gossips. Then it seem'd to him  
That young Sir Roland, from his curtain'd pew  
Beneath the mildew'd hatchments of his race,  
Look'd with his large dark eyes askance at him,  
And seem'd to say, "So *you* are home again,  
Author of the dishonour of my house!"  
But if young Roland's eyes grew somewhat sad  
At sight of Denzil and his little girl,  
It was but at the memories they 'roused  
Of her, his early playmate and his friend  
Whom still he lov'd and mourn'd, for to his ears  
Had never come those scandalous reports  
Whisper'd around, and only Geoffrey's mind  
O'er sensitive, could have imagin'd aught  
Of enmity or malice in that glance.

(Constance's hatchment never grated there  
Against the whitewash'd walls of Farleigh Church,  
When summer breezes stirr'd the dingy baize  
That hid the open'd door; there is no sign,  
No tablet, urn, or monumental stone  
Recalling to the minds of those who pray

Her who once knelt amongst them, and who now  
Sleeps under bluer skies.

Far, far away,  
There, in the cemetery on the hill  
Where Protestants are buried, does she lie—  
There is a dearth of grass in Southern lands  
But such a wealth of flow'rs ! Anemones  
As many color'd as the changing wave,  
Narcissus, single roses, violets—  
And some sweet blossom hanging from a tree  
Whose name I know not—golden is its bloom,  
And soft as feathers from some magic bird—  
These droop around her, fann'd by gentle gales,

And over these, again, a cypress tow'rs,  
And in amongst its sombre boding shade  
A Banksia rose is climbing towards the sky,  
Striving maybe, to reach it by the help  
Of that high fun'ral tree, as hopeful hearts  
Aspire to Heaven on the wings of Death.)

So, after this first Sunday, it was long  
Ere Geoffrey Denzil went to church again,  
For there he met so many memories  
He fain would bury ; but his little girl,

(To glad', he thought, a hov'ring angel's eyes,)
He taught to worship where her mother knelt
In those old days before he saw her face ;
And never more at sacred rite or name
Did his curved lips assume a sceptic's smile,
Since Constance had believ'd that all was true ;
And if there was a heaven, she was there,
And she would welcome him, if any deed
Or any suffering of his on Earth
Could wipe away the Past, and give the saints
That greater joy than when those " ninety-nine
Just men " present themselves " Who " (saith the text)
Need no repentance."

Thus, if strange, 'twas true,
That tho' poor Constance, with her yielding will
Had seem'd to him at first a feeble child
In pow'rs of reasoning and abstruse thought,
Yet she had left upon his sterner mind
(So confident before, in its proud aim
At self-emancipation from all chains
Imposed by man as advocate of heav'n !)
A deeper trace than he had ever dream'd.

Thus, a faint spark, if left at liberty

To nestle in the hollow of an oak,  
May gently light a beacon in its heart,  
Or leave a mark upon the glowing wood—  
Whilst up towards heav'n the evanescent flame  
Will die in smoke, so soft, and blue, and vague,  
It seems beyond belief so faint a thing  
Could leave so deep a trace upon the tree !

And this is why the poor at Denzil Place  
Are all so well and warmly housed and clad,  
And why the old and young, in glowing words,  
Sound Denzil's praises, and on Sabbath morns  
Will pray that God may bless him, in their pray'rs,

And think of him with reverence and love.  
(For this is where the godly often err,—  
The sinner sinning against one command  
Of God or man, need not in consequence  
Prove murderer, or thief, extortioner,  
Mover of neighbour's landmarks, seething kids  
In mother's milk, or, being by mischance  
Found wanting once, prove base in ev'rything.  
For human souls I hold no hopeless creed  
Of utter degeneration to decay  
And degradation, just because the fault,

“The little rift” maybe “within the lute”  
Was not where *your’s* or *mine* made *our’s* play false !)  
So Geoffrey Denzil taught his little girl  
The godly saws he did not follow once,  
And as he look’d on her he tried to think  
That tender bud would bloom into a flow’r  
Like the dead flow’r he mourn’d.

It was a grief

To him to think she had not known his love,  
That never, never, in the after years  
Could he converse of her as one they knew  
And wept together ! This would make him sad,  
And seem’d to chill the love he bore the child,  
Whilst with the innocent indifference  
Of children for the mother who has borne them,  
Who died for them, but whom they have not seen,  
And did not know, and cannot therefore mourn,  
She often ask’d, “Had she black eyes, or blue,  
“Mama ?” and many careless questions more  
Cutting like knives. “She had brown eyes, my child.”  
He answer’d her, “And never your’s or mine  
“Will look upon such lovely eyes again.”

‘Thus thro’ the years, the father looking back,

The little daughter full of child-like hope,—  
Strangers in thought, yet by a mutual love  
Uniting hearts, together hand in hand,  
These two walked on towards the hoped-for Heaven.

## CONCLUSION.

“ And soon again shall music swell the breeze ;  
 Soon, issuing forth, shall glitter thro’ the trees  
 Vestures of nuptial white ; and hymns be sung,  
 And violets scatter’d round ; and old and young  
 In every cottage-porch with garlands green  
 Stand still to gaze, and gazing, bless the scene ;  
 While her dark eyes declining, by his side  
 Moves in her virgin-veil the gentle bride.”

ROGERS.

THE other day, in somewhat pensive mood,  
 I saunter’d down a dusty Sussex lane  
 Late in the afternoon ; the sun was hot,  
 And tho’ the road was shaded by the oaks  
 In the off-lying hedgerows near the park,  
 Yet still I long’d for those intenser shades  
 I saw afar, between the iron gates  
 Of Denzil Place, (for I had sought the scene  
 Of this sad simple story, and could see  
 The woods of Denzil Place and Farleigh Court,)  
 But ere I reach’d the tempting tangled shade

I heard the clattering of coming steeds,  
And round the tufted angle of the lane  
A youth and maiden suddenly appear'd  
Beaming with life and laughter. As they pass'd  
I watch'd them curiously, for both of them  
Were beautiful, and something made me feel  
A deeper interest than e'er inspired  
The sight of any other youth or maid.

The girl was fair, with wealth of golden locks,  
And something in the colour of her eyes  
Reminded me of eyes I used to know  
In years gone by. I turn'd aside to ask  
An aged woman, who, on seeing them,  
Had risen from her seat beside her hives  
And dropp'd a curtesy ; who and what they were  
This comely pair ?

“ She, with the yellow locks,”  
Answer'd the dame, endeavoring while she spoke  
To catch a glimpse of their retreating forms,  
“ Is Violet Denzil, and the gentleman  
“ Who rode with her, and follows her as shade  
“ Follows on sunshine, is our master here  
“ The young Sir Roland ; old Sir John L'Estrange

“ Married the mother of Miss Violet  
“ Before she married Mr. Denzil there  
“ Over at Denzil Place, (you see the gates,)  
“ So they are kind of kin-like, and yet still  
“ Our parson says they are not kin at all,  
“ Since young Sir Roland is not child of her  
“ But of Sir John’s first lady, and he says  
“ He hopes that he shall live to join their hands  
“ As man and wife, and parson also says  
“ Their marriage-ring will join the properties,  
“ And put to shame some scandal-mong’ring tales  
“ Folks whisper’d here.”

With this she turn’d away  
And fearless of the buzzing colony  
That swarm’d about the ruffles of her cap,  
Began to celebrate some mystic rite  
Connected with her bees, whilst on I stroll’d,  
Following the prints which those two horses’ hoofs  
Left in the dusty road, and lost in thought.

So this fair being with the golden hair  
Was Violet Denzil, born in Italy,  
The child of Love and Beauty ! and the youth  
Was that brave handsome boy who used to romp

And ramble with his lovely stepmother  
Thro' fields and woodlands in the years gone by ;  
And they would marry, (so the parson thought,  
And who should be so good a judge as he,  
Who doubtless had wise reasons for such thought ?)

Ah, here, if marriage of the young and fair,—  
If blooming cheeks and lovely sunny head,  
Wedding with brave brown eyes and stalwart frame  
And manly heart, e'er promised happiness,  
Then should these two, who like some glowing dream  
Of Prince and Princess in a fairy-tale,  
So gaily gallopp'd past me, on the road

**To Life and Love ; then should these two be bless'd  
With ev'ry earthly good ;—around their knees  
May happy children laugh and sport in glee,  
And children's children, in the after years—  
Good little Geoffreys and fair Constances,  
Who must not sin like naughty grandpapa,  
Or pretty grandmama, who died so young,  
And whose sweet picture, in a muslin dress  
“ With coral-color'd sash and shady hat,  
And looking like an angel,” they will see  
Hanging within the walls of Denzil Place.**



## EPILOGUE.



lay aside my pen,—my story ends,  
“Of some few years in some few English lives ;”  
Warning of evils wrought by bosom friends  
To some few English husbands and their wives,—  
A simple story—unimprov’d by rhymes,  
And unembellish’d with that mystic glow  
Which hovers o’er the tales of olden times,  
The chivalresque romaunts of long ago.  
Yet I would say, to compensate for this,  
(Had but my Constance lov’d the man she ought,  
And had my Geoffrey’s been a lawful kiss,)  
That I had felt and understood each thought  
Portray’d in them ; and that they liv’d and mov’d  
And had their being outside the gilded rim  
Of this poor book, and that they sinn’d and lov’d,  
And that in truth I knew both her and him.—  
Or wholly in the flesh, or as, may be,  
A sculptor recognises, blent in one  
From many models borrow’d, arm or knee  
Or rounded throat or bosom ;—and the sun  
Has shone in very truth on ev’ry scene  
My humble pen has striven to portray,  
And Denzil Place and Farleigh Court have been  
With all their inmates, and I know the day



*[The page contains approximately 20 lines of extremely faint, illegible text.]*

And worship her as tho' a thing divine  
 Almost too sacred for the human eye  
 To light upon ;—whilst she had seen with grief  
 In him the signs of a persistent will  
 To war against all orthodox belief,  
 Yet hoped, with patience, to convert him still,  
 So sought his side, nor ever miss'd the chance  
 Of tender word of counsel, wise and strong  
 Beyond her years, or sweet reproachful glance  
 At any word or action seeming wrong.  
 No naughty novels did my Geoffrey lend,—  
 No *Ernest Feydeaus*, and no *Paul de Kocks*,  
 He was the “ working man of England's friend ”  
 And talk'd of Progress whilst she knitted socks,  
 'Twas thus they fell . . . . ! E'en as they sagely  
 plann'd  
 The reformation of the human kind,  
 They saw their boasted bulwarks blown as sand  
 At the remorseless mercy of the wind !  
 “ Captain or Colonel, Knight, or man-at-arms ”  
 So may *you* fall, whilst gazing at the sky,  
 Blind to the many dangers and alarms  
 Which close beside you in your pathway lie !  
 And you, fair lady, who could never err  
 Save from your beauty, or your ‘ melting mood ’  
 Which dreads all cruelty,—be warn'd by her  
 And be a little cruel to be good !  
 She did not fall from love of deadly sin,  
 Nor did her breast for guilty pleasures glow,  
 And pure had been the heart that beat within,  
 Save for her fatal fear of saying “ no.”  
 But ah, forgive her ! in the coming years  
 She cannot cross your path, or cause your cheek  
 To blush for her delinquencies,—her tears  
 Are dried for ever, and her voice will **speak**

To Geoffrey Denzil not one loving word  
 Of all the many he remembers yet,  
 Nor is her fairy footfall ever heard  
 Now or for ever ;—so forgive, forget  
 Her many faults and failings, she is dead,  
 And many miss her, and would fain recall  
 Her and her frailties, and would e'en, instead,  
 Exaggerate her virtues :—faults and all  
 Some foolish people lov'd her. She is gone  
 Like this sad autumn day, of which the hue  
 Suits well this landscape ;—all the sculptured stone  
 Of these two Denzil dragons, wet with dew  
 Is glist'ning from a newly risen moon  
 Charming the hazy distance 'neath her reign  
 Of silv'ry sad enchantment. Very soon  
 Thro' ev'ry quaint Elizabethan pane  
 Glimmers a twinkling light. Farewell old home !  
 Old house with windows looking like the eyes  
 Of some old friend, who smiles at those who come

And sighs for those who go ;—but mostly sighs  
 For her who never more will come or go,  
 And never more may look upon thy face !  
 Farewell sad witness of her shame and woe,  
 Farewell to Constance and to Denzil Place.





1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".

